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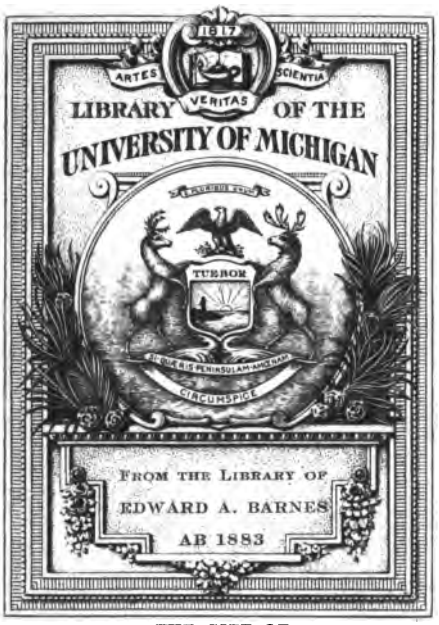

THE GIFT OF

MRS. BARNARD PIERCE
MRS. CARL HAESSLER
MRS. HOWARD LUCE
MISS MARGARET KNIGHT

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1881

TWO YEARS AGO

TWO YEARS AGO

BY

CHARLES KINGSLEY

IN TWO VOLS.—VOL. I.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1881

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TWO YEARS AGO.

INTRODUCTORY.

It may seem a somewhat Irish method of beginning the story of "Two Years Ago" by a scene which happened but a month since. And yet, will not the story be on that very account a better type of many a man's own experiences! How few of us had learnt the meaning of "Two Years Ago," until this late quiet autumn time; and till Christmas, too, with its gaps in the old ring of friendly faces, never to be filled up again on earth, began to teach us somewhat of its lesson.

Two years ago, while pestilence was hovering over us and ours; while the battle-roar was ringing in our ears; who had time to think, to ask what all that meant; to seek for the deep lesson which we knew must lie beneath? Two years ago was the time for work; for men to do with all their might whatsoever their hands found to do. But now the storm has lulled once more; the air has cleared awhile, and we can talk calmly over all the wonders of that sudden, strange, and sad "Two years ago."

So felt, at least, two friends who went down, just one week before Christmas-day, to Whitbury, in Berkshire. Two years ago had come to one of them, as to thousands more, the crisis of his life; and he was talking of it with his companion; and was on his way, too, to learn more of that story, which this book contains, and in which he had borne his part.

They were both of them men who would at first sight interest a stranger. The shorter of the two he might have seen before—at picture sales, Royal Academy meetings, dinner parties, evening parties, anywhere and everywhere, in town; for Claude Mellot is a general favourite, and a general guest.

He is a tiny, delicate-featured man, with a look of half-lazy enthusiasm about his beautiful face, which reminds you much of Shelley's portrait; only he has what Shelley had not, clustering auburn curls, and a rich brown beard, soft as silk. You set him down at once as a man of delicate susceptibility, sweetness, thoughtfulness; probably (as he actually is) an artist.

His companion is a man of statelier stamp, tall, dark, and handsome, with a very large forehead; if the face has a fault, it is that the mouth is too small; that, and the expression of face too, and the tone of voice, seem to indicate over-refinement, possibly a too aristocratic exclusiveness. He is dressed like a very fine gentleman indeed, and looks and talks like one. Aristocrat, however, in the common sense of the word, he is not; for he is a native of the Model Republic, and sleeping-partner in a great New York merchant firm.

He is chatting away to Claude Mellot, the artist, about Frémont's election; and on that point seems to be earnest enough, though patient and moderate.

"My dear Claude, our loss is gain. The delay of the next four years was really necessary, that we might consolidate our party. And I leave you to judge, if it has grown to its present size in but a few months, what dimensions it will have attained before the next election. We require the delay, too, to discover who are our really best men; not merely as orators, but as workers; and you English ought to know better than any nation, that the latter class of men are those whom the world most needs—that though Aaron may be an altogether inspired preacher, yet it is only slow-tongued practical Moses, whose spokesman he is, who can deliver Israel from their taskmasters. Besides, my dear fellow, we really want the next four years—'tell it not in Gath'—to look about us and see what is to be done. Your wisest Englishmen justly complain of us, that our 'platform' is as yet a merely negative one; that we define what the South shall not do, but not what the North shall. Ere four years be over, we will have a 'positive platform,' at which you shall have no cause to grumble."

"I still think with Marie, that your 'positive platform' is already made for you, plain as the sun in heaven, as the lightnings of Sinai. Free those slaves at once and utterly!"

"Impatient idealist! By what means? By law, or by force? Leave us to draw a *cordon sanitaire*

round the tainted States, and leave the system to die a natural death, as it rapidly will if it be prevented from enlarging its field. Don't fancy that a dream of mine. None know it better than the Southerners themselves. What makes them ready just now to risk honour, justice, even the common law of nations and humanity, in the struggle for new slave territory? What but the consciousness that without virgin soil, which will yield rapid and enormous profit to slave labour, they and their institution must be ruined!"

"The more reason for accelerating so desirable a consummation, by freeing the slaves at once."

"Humph!" said Stangrave with a smile. "Who so cruel at times as your too benevolent philanthropist? Did you ever count the meaning of those words? Disruption of the Union, an invasion of the South by the North; and an internecine war, aggravated by the horrors of a general rising of the slaves, and such scenes as Hayti beheld sixty years ago. If you have ever read them, you will pause ere you determine to repeat them on a vaster scale."

"It is dreadful, Heaven knows, even in thought! But, Stangrave, can any moderation on your part ward it off? Where there is crime, there is vengeance; and without shedding of blood is no remission of sin."

"God knows! It may be true: but God forbid that I should ever do aught to hasten what may come. Oh, Claude, do you fancy that I, of all men, do not feel at moments the thirst for brute vengeance?"

Claude was silent.

"Judge for yourself, you who know all—what man among us Northerners can feel, as I do, what those hapless men may have deserved?—I who have day and night before me the brand of their cruelty, filling my heart with fire? I need all my strength, all my reason, at times to say to myself, as I say to others—'Are not these slaveholders men of like passions with yourself? What have they done which you would not have done in their place?' I have never read that key to Uncle Tom's Cabin. I will not even read this Dred, admirable as I believe it to be."

"Why should you?" said Claude. "Have you not a key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, more pathetic than any word of man's or woman's?"

"But I do not mean that! I will not read them, because I have the key to them in my own heart, Claude: because conscience has taught me to feel for the Southerner as a brother, who is but what I might have been; and to sigh over his misdirected courage and energy, not with hatred, not with contempt: but with pity, all the more intense the more he scorns that pity; to long, not merely for the slaves' sake, but for the masters' sake, to see them—the once chivalrous gentlemen of the South—delivered from the meshes of a net which they did not spread for themselves, but which was round their feet, and round their fathers', from the day that they were born. You ask me to destroy these men. I long to save them from their certain doom!"

"You are right, and a better Christian than I am, I believe. Certainly they do need pity, if any sinners do; for slavery seems to be—to judge from Mr. Brooks's triumph—a great moral curse, and a heavier degradation to the slaveholder himself, than it can ever be to the slave."

"Then I would free them from that curse, that degradation. If the negro asks, 'Am I not a man and a brother?' have they no right to ask it also? Shall I, pretending to love my country, venture on any rash step which may shut out the whole Southern white population from their share in my country's future glory? No; have but patience with us, you comfortable liberals of the Old World, who find freedom ready made to your hands, and we will pay you all. Remember, we are but children yet; our sins are the sins of youth,—greediness, intemperance, petulance, self-conceit. When we are purged from our youthful sins, England will not be ashamed of her child."

"Ashamed of you? I often wish I could make Americans understand the feeling of England to you —the honest pride, as of a mother who has brought into the world the biggest baby that ever this earth beheld, and is rather proud of its stamping about and beating her in its pretty pets. Only the old lady does get a little cross when she hears you talk of the wrongs which you have endured from her, and teaching your children to hate us as their ancient oppressors, on the ground of a foolish war, of which

every Englishman is utterly ashamed, and in the result of which he glories really as much as you do."

"Don't talk of 'you,' Claude! You know well what I think on that point. Never did one nation make the *amende honorable* to another more fully and nobly than you have to us; and those who try to keep up the quarrel are—I won't say what. But the truth is, Claude, we have had no real sorrows; and therefore we can afford to play with imaginary ones. God grant that we may not have our real ones—that we may not have to drink of the cup of which our great mother drank two years ago!"

"It was a wholesome bitter for us; and it may be so for you likewise: but we will have no sad forebodings on the eve of the blessed Christmas-tide. He lives, He loves, He reigns; and all is well, for we are His, and He is ours."

"Ah," said Stangrave, "when Emerson sneered at you English for believing your Old Testament, he little thought that that was the lesson which it had taught you; and that that same lesson was the root of all your greatness. That that belief in God's being, in some mysterious way, the living King of England and of Christendom, has been the very idea which has kept you in peace and safety, now for many a hundred years, moving slowly on from good to better, not without many backslidings and many shortcomings, but still finding out, quickly enough, when you were on the wrong road, and not ashamed

to retrace your steps, and to *reform*, as brave strong men should dare to do; a people who have been for many an age in the vanguard of all the nations, and the champions of sure and solid progress throughout the world; because what is new among you is not patched artificially on to the old, but grows organically out of it, with a growth like that of your own English oak, whose every new-year's leaf-crop is fed by roots which burrow deep in many a buried generation, and the rich soil of full a thousand years."

"Stay!" said the little artist. "We are quite conceited enough already, without your eloquent adulation, sir! But there is a truth in your words. There is a better spirit roused among us, and that not merely of two years ago. I knew this part of the country well in 1846-7-8, and since then, I can bear witness, a spirit of self-reform has been awakened round here, in many a heart which I thought once utterly frivolous. I find, in every circle of every class, men and women asking to be taught their duty, that they may go and do it; I find everywhere schools, libraries, and mechanics' institutes springing up: and rich and poor meeting together more and more in the faith that God has made them all. As for the outward and material improvements—you know as well as I, that since free trade and emigration, the labourers confess themselves better off than they have been for fifty years; and though you will not see in the chalk counties that rapid and enormous agricultural improvement which you will in Lincolnshire,

Yorkshire, or the Lothians, yet you shall see enough to-day to settle for you the question whether we old-country folk are in a state of decadence and decay. *Par exemple*——"

And Claude pointed to the clean large fields, with their neat close-clipt hedge-rows, among which here and there stood cottages, more than three-fourths of them new.

"Those well-drained fallow fields, ten years ago, were poor clay pastures, fetlock deep in mire six months in the year, and accursed in the eyes of my poor dear old friend, Squire Lavington; because they were so full of old moles'-nests, that they threw all horses down. I am no farmer: but they seem surely to be somewhat altered since then."

As he spoke, they turned off the main line of the rolling clays toward the foot of the chalk hills, and began to brush through short cuttings of blue gault and "green sand," so called by geologists, because its usual colours are bright brown, snow-white, and crimson.

Soon they get glimpses of broad silver Whit, as she slides, with divided streams, through bright water-meadows, and stately groves of poplar, and abele, and pine; while, far aloft upon the left, the downs rise steep, crowned with black fir spinnies, and dotted with dark box and juniper.

Soon they pass old Whitford Priory, with its numberless gables, nestling amid mighty elms, and the Nunpool flashing and roaring as of old, and the

broad shallow below sparkling and laughing in the low, but bright December sun.

"So slides on the noble river, for ever changing, and yet for ever the same—always fulfilling its errand, which yet is never fulfilled," said Stangrave,—he was given to half-mystic utterances, and hankerings after Pagan mythology, learnt in the days when he worshipped Emerson, and tried (but unsuccessfully) to worship Margaret Fuller Ossoli,—"Those old Greeks had a deep insight into nature, when they gave to each river not merely a name, but a semi-human personality, a river-god of its own. It may be but a collection of ever-changing atoms of water;—what is your body but a similar collection of atoms, decaying and renewing every moment? Yet you are a person; and is not the river, too, a person—a live thing? It has an individual countenance which you love, which you would recognise again, meet it where you will; it marks the whole landscape; it determines probably the geography and the society of a whole district. It draws you, too, to itself by an indefinable mesmeric attraction. If you stop in a strange place, the first instinct of your idle half-hour is, to lounge by the river. It is a person to you; you call it—Scotchmen do, at least—she, and not it. How do you know that you are not philosophically correct, and that the river has a spirit as well as you?"

"Humph!" said Claude, who talks mysticism himself by the hour, but snubs it in every one else. "It has trout, at least; and they stand, I suppose, for its

soul, as the raisins did for those of Jean Paul's gingerbread bride and bridegroom and peradventure baby."

"Oh you materialist English! sporting-mad all of you, from the duke who shooteth stags to the clod who poacheth rabbits!"

"And who therefore can fight Russians at Inkermann, duke and clod alike, and side by side; never better (says the chronicler of old) than in their first battle. I can neither fight nor fish, and on the whole agree with you: but I think it proper to be as English as I can in the presence of an American."

A whistle—a creak—a jar; and they stop at the little Whitford station, where a cicerone for the vale, far better than Claude was, made his appearance, in the person of Mark Armsworth, banker, railway director, and *de facto* king of Whitbury town, long since elected by universal suffrage (his own vote included) as permanent *locum tenens* of her gracious Majesty.

He hails Claude cheerfully from the platform, as he waddles about, with a face as of the rising sun, radiant with good fun, good humour, good deeds, good news, and good living. His coat was scarlet once; but purple now. His leathers and boots were doubtless clean this morning; but are now afflicted with elephantiasis, being three inches deep in solid mud, which his old groom is scraping off as fast as he can. His cap is duntled in; his back bears fresh stains of peat; a gentle rain distils from the few

angles of his person, and bedews the platform; for Mark Armsworth has "been in Whit" to-day.

All porters and guards touch their hats to him; the station-master rushes up and down frantically, shouting, "Where are those horse-boxes? Now then, look alive!" for Mark is chairman of the line, and everybody's friend beside; and as he stands there being scraped, he finds time to inquire after every one of the officials by turns, and after their wives, children, and sweethearts beside.

"What a fine specimen of your English squire!" says Stangrave.

"He is no squire; he is the Whitbury banker, of whom I told you."

"Armsworth!" said Stangrave, looking at the old man with interest.

"Mark Armsworth himself. He is acting as squire, though, now; for he has hunted the Whitford Priors ever since poor old Lavington's death."

"Now then—those horse-boxes!" . . .

"Very sorry, sir; I telegraphed up, but we could get but one down."

"Put the horses into that, then; and there's an empty carriage! Jack, put the hounds into it, and they shall all go second class, as sure as I'm chairman!"

The grinning porters hand the strange passengers in, while Mark counts the couples with his whip-point,—

"Ravager — Roysterer; Melody — Gay-lass; all right. Why, where's that old thief of a Goodman?"

"Went over a gate as soon as he saw the couples; and wouldn't come in at any price, sir," says the huntsman. "Gone home by himself, I expect."

"Goodman, Goodman, boy!" And forthwith out of the station-room slips the noble old hound, grey-nosed, grey-eyebrowed, who has hidden, for purposes of his own, till he sees all the rest safe locked in.

Up he goes to Mark, and begins wriggling against his knees, and looking up as only dogs can. "Oh, want to go first-class with me, eh? Jump in, then!" And in jumps the hound, and Mark struggles after him.

"Hillo, sir! Come out! Here are your betters here before you," as he sees Stangrave, and a fat old lady in the opposite corner.

"Oh, no; let the dog stay!" says Stangrave.

"I shall wet you, sir, I'm afraid."

"Oh, no."

And Mark settles himself, puffing, with the hound's head on his knees, and begins talking fast and loud.

"Well, Mr. Mellot, you're a stranger here. Haven't seen you since poor Miss Honour died. Ah, sweet angel she was! Thought my Mary would never get over it. She's just such another, though I say it, barring the beauty. Goodman, boy! You recollect old Goodman, son of Galloper, that the old squire gave our old squire?"

Claude, of course, knows—as all do who know those parts—who The Old Squire is; long may he live, patriarch of the chase! The genealogy he does not.

"Ah, well—Miss Honour took to the pup, and used to walk him out; and a prince of a hound he is; so now he's old we let him have his own way, for her sake; and nobody'll ever bully you, will they, Goodman, my boy?"

"I want to introduce you to a friend of mine."

"Proud to know any friend of yours, sir."

"Mr. Stangrave—Mr. Armsworth. Mr. Stangrave is an American gentleman, who is anxious to see Whitbury and the neighbourhood."

"Well, I shall be happy to show it him, then—can't have a better guide, though I say it—know everything by this time, and everybody, man, woman, and child, as I hope Mr. Stangrave'll find when he gets to know old Mark."

"You must not speak of getting to know you, my dear sir; I know you intimately already, I assure you; and more, am under very deep obligations to you, which, I regret to say, I can only repay by thanks."

"Obligation to me, my dear sir?"

"Indeed I am: I will tell you all when we are alone." And Stangrave glanced at the fat old woman, who seemed to be listening intently.

"Oh, never mind her," says Armsworth; "deaf as a post: very good woman, but so deaf—ought to speak to her, though"—and, reaching across, to the infinite amusement of his companions, he roared in the fat woman's face, with a voice as of a speaking-trumpet—"Glad to see you, Mrs. Grove! Got those dividends ready for you next time you come into town."

"Yah!" screamed the hapless woman, who (as the rest saw) heard perfectly well. "What do you mean, frightening a lady in that way? Deaf, indeed!"

"Why," roared Mark again, "ain't you Mrs. Grove, of Drytown Dirtywater?"

"No, nor no acquaintance! What business is it of your'n, sir, to go hollering in ladies' faces at your age?"

"Well:—but I'll swear if you ain't her, you're somebody else. I know you as well as the town clock."

"Me? If you must know, sir, I'm Mrs. Pettigrew's mother, the Linendraper's establishment, sir; a-going down for Christmas, sir!"

"Humph!" says Mark: "you see—was sure I knew her—know everybody here. As I said, if she wasn't Mrs. Grove, she was somebody else. Ever in these parts before?"

"Never: but I have heard a good deal of them; and very much charmed with them I am. I have seldom seen a more distinctive specimen of English scenery."

"And how you are improving round here!" said Claude, who knew Mark's weak points, and wanted to draw him out. "Your homesteads seem all new; three fields have been thrown into one, I fancy, over half the farms."

Mark broke out at once on his favourite topic,—"I believe you! I'm making the mare go here in Whitford, without the money too, sometimes. I'm

steward now, bailiff—ha! ha! these four years past—to Mrs. Lavington's Irish husband; I wanted him to have a regular agent, a canny Scot, or Yorkshireman. Faith, the poor man couldn't afford it, and so fell back on old Mark. Paddy loves a job, you know. So I've the votes and the fishing, and send him his rents, and manage all the rest pretty much my own way.

When the name of Lavington was mentioned, Mark observed Stangrave start; and an expression passed over his face difficult to be defined—it seemed to Mark mingled pride and shame. He turned to Claude, and said, in a low voice, but loud enough for Mark to hear,—

"Lavington? Is this their country also? As I am going to visit the graves of my ancestors, I suppose I ought to visit those of hers."

Mark caught the words which he was not intended to.

"Eh? Sir, do you belong to these parts?"

"My family, I believe, lived in the neighbourhood of Whitbury, at a place called Stangrave-end."

"To be sure! Old farm-house now; fine old oak carving in it, though; fine old family it must have been; church full of their monuments. Hum,—ha! Well! that's pleasant, now! I've often heard there were good old families away there in New England; never thought that there were Whitbury people among them. Hum—well! the world's not so big as people think, after all. And you spoke of the Lavingtons? They are great folks here—or were——" He

was going to rattle on: but he saw a pained expression on both the travellers' faces, and Stangrave stopped him, somewhat drily—

"I know nothing of them, I assure you, or they of me. Your country here is certainly charming, and shows little of those signs of decay which some people in America impute to it."

"Decay!" Mark went off at score. "Decay be hanged! There's life in the old dog yet, sir! and dead pigs are looking up since free trade and emigration. Cheap bread and high wages now: and instead of lands going out of cultivation, as they threatened—bosh! there's a greater breadth down in wheat in the vale now than there ever was; and look at the roots. Farmers must farm now, or sink; and by George! they are farming, like sensible fellows: and a fig for that old turnip ghost of Protection! There was a fellow came down from the Carlton—you know what that is!" Stangrave bowed, and smiled assent. "From the Carlton, sir, two years since, and tried it on, till he fell in with old Mark. I told him a thing or two; among the rest, told him to his face that he was a liar; for he wanted to make farmers believe they were ruined, when he knew they were not; and that he'd get 'em back Protection, when he knew that he couldn't—and, what's more, he didn't mean to. So he cut up rough, and wanted to call me out."

"Did you go?" asked Stangrave, who was fast becoming amused with his man.

"I told him that that wasn't my line, unless he'd

try Eley's greens at forty yards; and then I was his man: but if he laid a finger on me, I'd give him as sound a horsewhipping, old as I am, as ever man had in his life. And so I would." And Mark looked complacently at his own broad shoulders. "And since then, my lord and I have had it all our own way; and Minchampstead and Co. is the only firm in the vale."

"What's become of a Lord Vieuxbois, who used to live somewhere hereabouts? I used to meet him at Rome."

"Rome?" said Mark solemnly. "Yes; he was too fond of Rome, awhile back: can't see what people want running into foreign parts to look at those poor idolators, and their Punch and Judy plays. Pray for 'em, and keep clear of them, is the best rule:—but he has married my lord's youngest daughter; and three pretty children he has,—ducks of children. Always comes to see me in my shop, when he drives into town. Oh!—he's doing pretty well.—One of these new between-the-stools, Peelites they call them—hope they'll be as good as the name. However, he's a free-trader, because he can't help it. So we have his votes; and as to his Conservatism, let him conserve hips and haws if he chooses, like a 'pothecary. After all, why pull down anything, before it's tumbling on your head? By the by, sir, as you're a man of money, there's that Stangrave-end farm in the market now. Pretty little investment,—I'd see that you got it cheap; and my lord wouldn't bid against you, of

course, as you're a liberal—all Americans, are, I suppose. And so you'd oblige us, as well as yourself, for it would give us another vote for the county."

"Upon my word, you tempt me; but I do not think that this is just the moment for an American to desert his own country, and settle in England. I should not be here now, had I not this autumn done all I could for America in America, and so crossed the sea to serve her, if possible, in England."

"Well, perhaps not; especially if you're a Frémonter."

"I am, I assure you."

"Thought as much, by your looks. Don't see what else an honest man can be just now."

Stangrave laughed. "I hope every one thinks so in England."

"Trust us for that, sir! We know a man when we see him here; I hope they'll do the same across the water."

There was silence for a minute or two; and then Mark began again.

"Look!—there's the farm; that's my lord's. I should like to show you the short-horns there, sir!—all my Lord Ducie's and Sir Edward Knightley's stock; bought a bull-calf of him the other day myself for a cool hundred, old fool that I am. Never mind, spreads the breed. And here are mills—four pair of new stones. Old Whit don't know herself again. But I dare say they look small enough to you, sir, after your American water-power."

"What of that? It is just as honourable in you to make the most of a small river, as in us to make the most of a large one."

"You speak like a book, sir. By the by, if you think of taking home a calf or two, to improve your New England breed—there are a good many gone across the sea in the last few years—I think we could find you three or four beauties, not so very dear, considering the blood."

"Thanks; but I really am no farmer."

"Well—no offence, I hope: but I am like your Yankees in one thing, you see;—always have an eye to a bit of business. If I didn't, I shouldn't be here now."

"How very tasteful!—our own American shrubs! what a pity that they are not in flower! What is this," asked Stangrave,—"one of your noblemen's parks?"

And they began to run through the cutting in Minchampstead Park, where the owner has concealed the banks of the rail for nearly half a mile, in a thicket of azaleas, rhododendrons, and clambering roses.

"Ah!—isn't it pretty? His lordship let us have the land for a song; only bargained that we should keep low, not to spoil his view; and so we did; and he's planted our cutting for us. I call that a present to the county, and a very pretty one too! Ah, give me these new brooms that sweep clean!"

"Your old brooms, like Lord Vieuxbois, were new brooms once, and swept well enough five hundred

years ago," said Stangrave, who had that filial reverence for English antiquity which sits so gracefully upon many highly educated and far-sighted Americans.

"Worn to the stumps, now, too many of them, sir; and want new-hething, as our broom-squires would say; and I doubt whether most of them are worth the cost of a fresh bind. Not that I can say that of the young lord. He's foremost in all that's good, if he had but money; and when he hasn't, he gives brains. Gave a lecture, in our institute at Whitford, last winter, on the four great Poets. Shot over my head a little, and other people's too: but my Mary—my daughter, sir, thought it beautiful; and there's nothing that she don't know."

"It is very hopeful, to see your aristocracy joining in the general movement, and bringing their taste and knowledge to bear on the lower classes."

"Yes, sir! We're going all right now, in the old country. Only have to steer straight, and not put on too much steam. But give me the new-comers, after all. They may be close men of business;—how else could one live? But when it comes to giving, I'll back them against the old ones for generosity, or taste either. They've their proper pride, when they get hold of the land; and they like to show it, and quite right they. You must see my little place too. It's not in such bad order, though I say it, and am but a country banker: but I'll back my flowers against half the squires round—my Mary's, that is—and my fruit too.—See, there! There's my lord's new schools, and

his model cottages, with more comforts in them, saving the size, than my father's house had; and there's his barrack, as he calls it, for the unmarried men—reading-room, and dining-room, in common; and a library of books, and a sleeping-room for each."

"It seems strange to complain of prosperity," said Stangrave; "but I sometimes regret that in America there is so little room for the very highest virtues; all are so well off, that one never needs to give; and what a man does here for others, they do for themselves."

"So much the better for them. There are other ways of being generous besides putting your hand in your pocket, sir! By Jove! there'll be room enough (if you'll excuse me) for an American to do fine things, as long as those poor negro slaves——"

"I know it; I know it," said Stangrave, in the tone of a man who had already made up his mind on a painful subject, and wished to hear no more of it. "You will excuse me; but I am come here to learn what I can of England. Of my own country I know enough, I trust, to do my duty in it when I return."

Mark was silent, seeing that he had touched a tender place; and pointed out one object of interest after another, as they ran through the flat park, past the great house with its Doric façade, which the eighteenth century had raised above the quiet cell of the Minchampstead recluses.

"It is very ugly," said Stangrave; and truly.

"Comfortable enough, though; and, as somebody

said, people live inside their houses, and not outside 'em. You should see the pictures there, though, while you're in the country. I can show you one or two, too, I hope. Never grudge money for good pictures. The pleasantest furniture in the world, as long as you keep them; and if you're tired of them, always fetch double their price."

After Minchampstead, the rail leaves the sands and clays, and turns up between the chalk hills, along the barge river which it has rendered useless, save as a supernumerary trout-stream; and then along Whit, now flowing clearer and clearer, as we approach its springs amid the lofty downs. On through more water-meadows, and rows of pollard willow, and peat-pits crested with tall golden reeds, and still dykes,—each in summer a floating flower-bed; while Stangrave looks out of the window, his face lighting up with curiosity.

"How perfectly English! At least, how perfectly un-American! It is just Tennyson's beautiful dream—

> 'On either side the river lie
> Long fields of barley and of rye,
> Which clothe the wold and meet the sky,
> And through the field the stream runs by,
> To many towered Camelot.'

"Why, what is this?" as they stop again at a station, where the board bears, in large letters, "Shalott."

"Shalott? Where are the

> 'Four grey walls, and four grey towers,'

which overlook a space of flowers?"

There, upon the little island, are the castle-ruins, now converted into a useful bone-mill. "And the lady?—is that she?"

It was only the miller's daughter, fresh from a boarding-school, gardening in a broad straw-hat.

"At least," said Claude, "she is tending far prettier flowers than ever the lady saw; while the lady herself, instead of weaving and dreaming, is reading Miss Young's novels, and becoming all the wiser thereby, and teaching poor children in Hemmelford National School."

"And where is her fairy knight," asked Stangrave, "whom one half hopes to see riding down from that grand old house which sulks there above among the beech-woods as if frowning on all the change and civilisation below!"

"You do old Sidricstone injustice. Vieuxbois descends from thence, now-a-days, to lecture at mechanics' institutes, instead of the fairy knight, toiling along in the blazing summer weather, sweating in burning metal, like poor Perillus in his own bull."

"Then the fairy knight is extinct in England!" asked Stangrave, smiling.

"No man less; only he (not Vieuxbois, but his younger brother) has found a wide-awake cooler than an iron kettle, and travels by rail when he is at home; and when he was in the Crimea, rode a shaggy pony, and smoked cavendish all through the battle of Inkermann."

"He showed himself the old Sir Lancelot there," said Stangrave.

"He did. Wherefore the lady married him when the Guards came home; and he will breed prize pigs; and sit at the board of guardians; and take in the Times; clothed, and in his right mind; for the old Berserk spirit is gone out of him; and he is become respectable, in a respectable age, and is nevertheless just as brave a fellow as ever."

"And so all things are changed, except the river; where still—

> 'Willows whiten, aspens quiver.
> Little breezes dash and shiver
> On the stream that runneth ever.'"

"And," said Claude, smiling, "the descendants of mediæval trout snap at the descendants of mediæval flies, spinning about upon just the same sized and coloured wings on which their forefathers spun a thousand years ago; having become, in all that while, neither bigger nor wiser."

"But is it not a grand thought," asked Stangrave, —"the silence and permanence of nature amid the perpetual flux and noise of human life?—a grand thought that one generation goeth and another cometh, and the earth abideth for ever?"

"At least it is so much the worse for the poor old earth, if her doom is to stand still, while man improves and progresses from age to age."

"May I ask one question, sir?" said Stangrave, who saw that their conversation was puzzling their

jolly companion. "Have you heard any news yet of Mr. Thurnall!"

Mark looked him full in the face.

"Do you know him?"

"I did, in past years, most intimately."

"Then you knew the finest fellow, sir, that ever walked mortal earth."

"I have discovered that, sir, as well as you. I am under obligations to that man which my heart's blood will not repay. I shall make no secret of telling you what they are at a fit time."

Mark held out his broad red hand, and grasped Stangrave's till the joints cracked: his face grew as red as a turkey-cock's; his eyes filled with tears.

"His father must hear that! Hang it; his father must hear that! And Grace too!"

"Grace!" said Claude: "and is she with you?"

"With the old man, the angel! tending him night and day."

"And as beautiful as ever?"

"Sir!" said Mark solemnly, "when any one's soul is as beautiful as hers is, one never thinks about her face."

"Who is Grace?" asked Stangrave.

"A saint and a heroine!" said Claude. "You shall know all; for you ought to know. But you have no news of Tom; and I have none either. I am losing all hope now."

"I'm not, sir!" said Mark fiercely. "Sir, that boy's not dead; he can't be. He has more lives than a cat,

and if you know anything of him, you ought to know that."

"I have good reason to know it, none more: but——"

"But, sir! But what? Harm come to him, sir? The Lord wouldn't harm him for his father's sake; and as for the devil!—I tell you, sir, if he tried to fly away with him, he'd have to drop him before he'd gone a mile!" And Mark began blowing his nose violently, and getting so red that he seemed on the point of going into a fit.

"Tell you what it is, gentlemen," said he at last, "you come and stay with me, and see his father. It will comfort the old man—and—and comfort me too; for I get down-hearted about him at times."

"Strange attraction there was about that man," says Stangrave, *sotto voce*, to Claude.

"He was like a son to him——"

"Now, gentlemen. Mr. Mellot, you don't hunt?"

"No, thank you," said Claude.

"Mr. Stangrave does, I'll warrant."

"I have at various times, both in England and in Virginia."

"Ah! Do they keep up the real sport there, eh? Well that's the best thing I've heard of them, sir!—My horses are yours!—A friend of that boy, sir, is welcome to lame the whole lot, and I won't grumble. Three days a week, sir. Breakfast at eight, dinner at 5.30—none of your late London hours for me, sir; and after it the best bottle of port, though I say it, short of my friend S——'s, at Reading."

"You must accept," whispered Claude, "or he will be angry."

So Stangrave accepted; and all the more readily because he wanted to hear from the good banker many things about the lost Tom Thurnall.

. . . . .

"Here we are," cries Mark. "Now, you must excuse me: see to yourselves. I see to the puppies. Dinner at 5.30, mind! Come along, Goodman, boy!"

"Is this Whitbury?" asks Stangrave.

It was Whitbury, indeed. Pleasant old town, which slopes down the hill-side to the old church,—just "restored," though by Lords Minchampstead and Vieuxbois, not without Mark Armsworth's help, to its ancient beauty of grey flint and white clunch chequer-work, and quaint wooden spire. Pleasant churchyard round it, where the dead lie looking up to the bright southern sun, among huge black yews, upon their knoll of white chalk above the ancient stream. Pleasant white wooden bridge, with its row of urchins dropping flints upon the noses of elephantine trout, or fishing over the rail with crooked pins, while hapless gudgeon come dangling upward between stream and sky, with a look of sheepish surprise and shame, as of a schoolboy caught stealing apples, in their foolish visages. Pleasant new national schools at the bridge end, whither the urchins scamper at the sound of the two o'clock bell. Though it be an ugly pile enough of bright red brick, it is doing its work, as

Whitbury folk know well by now. Pleasant, too, though still more ugly, those long red arms of new houses which Whitbury is stretching out along its fine turnpikes,—especially up to the railway station beyond the bridge, and to the smart new hotel, which hopes (but hopes in vain) to outrival the ancient "Angler's Rest." Away thither, and not to the Railway Hotel, they trundle in a fly—leaving Mark Armsworth all but angry because they will not sleep, as well as breakfast, lunch, and dine with him daily,—and settle in the good old inn, with its three white gables overhanging the pavement, and its long lattice window buried deep beneath them, like—so Stangrave says—to a shrewd kindly eye under a bland white forehead.

No, good old inn; not such shall be thy fate, as long as trout are trout, and men have wit to catch them. For art thou not a sacred house? Art thou not consecrate to the Whitbury brotherhood of anglers! Is not the wainscot of that long low parlour inscribed with many a famous name? Are not its walls hung with many a famous countenance? Has not its oak-ribbed ceiling rung, for now a hundred years, to the laughter of painters, sculptors, grave divines (unbending at least there), great lawyers, statesmen, wits, even of Foote and Quin themselves; while the sleek landlord wiped the cobwebs off another magnum of that grand old port, and took in all the wisdom with a quiet twinkle of his sleepy eye? He rests now, good old man, among the yews beside his

forefathers; and on his tomb his lengthy epitaph, writ by himself; for Barker was a poet in his way.

Some people hold the same epitaph to be irreverent, because in a list of Barker's many blessings occurs the profane word "trout:" but those trout, and the custom which they brought him, had made the old man's life comfortable, and enabled him to leave a competence for his children; and why should not a man honestly thank Heaven for that which he knows has done him good, even though it be but fish?

He is gone: but the Whit is not, nor the Whitbury club; nor will, while old Mark Armsworth is king in Whitbury, and sits every evening in the Mayfly season at the table head, retailing good stories of the great anglers of his youth,—names which you, reader, have heard many a time,—and who could do many things besides handling a blow-line. But though the club is not what it was fifty years ago,—before Norway and Scotland became easy of access,—yet it is still an important institution of the town, to the members whereof all good subjects touch their hats; for does not the club bring into the town good money, and take out again only fish, which cost nothing in the breeding? Did not the club present the Town-hall with a portrait of the renowned fishing Sculptor? and did it not (only stipulating that the school should be built beyond the bridge to avoid noise) give fifty pounds to the said school but five years ago, in addition to Mark's own hundred?

But enough of this:—only may the Whitbury

club, in recompense for my thus handing them down to immortality, give me another day next year, as they gave me this: and may the Mayfly be strong on, and a south-west gale blowing!

In the course of the next week, in many a conversation, the three men compared notes as to the events of two years ago; and each supplied the other with new facts, which shall be duly set forth in this tale, saving and excepting, of course, the real reason why everybody did everything. For—as everybody knows who has watched life—the true springs of all human action are generally those which fools will not see, which wise men will not mention; so that, in order to present a readable tragedy of Hamlet, you must always "omit the part of Hamlet,"—and probably the ghost and the queen into the bargain.

CHAPTER I.

POETRY AND PROSE.

Now, to tell my story—if not as it ought to be told, at least as I can tell it,—I must go back sixteen years, —to the days when Whitbury boasted of forty coaches per diem, instead of one railway,—and set forth how, in its southern suburb, there stood two pleasant houses side by side, with their gardens sloping down to the Whit, and parted from each other only by the high brick fruit-wall, through which there used to be a door of communication; for the two occupiers were fast friends. In one of these two houses, sixteen years ago, lived our friend Mark Armsworth, banker, solicitor, land-agent, churchwarden, guardian of the poor, justice of the peace,—in a word, viceroy of Whitbury town, and far more potent therein than her gracious majesty Queen Victoria. In the other, lived Edward Thurnall, esquire, doctor of medicine, and consulting physician of all the country round. These two men were as brothers; and had been as brothers for now twenty years, though no two men could be more different, save in the two common virtues which bound them to each other; and that was, that they both were

honest and kind-hearted men. What Mark's character was, and is, I have already shown, and enough of it, I hope, to make my readers like the good old banker: as for Doctor Thurnall, a purer or gentler soul never entered a sick-room, with patient wisdom in his brain, and patient tenderness in his heart. Beloved and trusted by rich and poor, he had made to himself a practice large enough to enable him to settle two sons well in his own profession; the third and youngest was still in Whitbury. He was something of a geologist, too, and a botanist, and an antiquarian; and Mark Armsworth, who knew, and knows still, nothing of science, looked up to the Doctor as an inspired sage, quoted him, defended his opinion, right or wrong, and thrust him forward at public meetings, and in all places and seasons, much to the modest Doctor's discomfiture.

The good Doctor was sitting in his study on the morning on which my tale begins; having just finished his breakfast, and settled to his microscope in the bay-window opening on the lawn.

A beautiful October morning it was; one of those in which Dame Nature, healthily tired with the revelry of summer, is composing herself, with a quiet satisfied smile, for her winter's sleep. Sheets of dappled cloud were sliding slowly from the west; long bars of hazy blue hung over the southern chalk downs which gleamed pearly grey beneath the low south-eastern sun. In the vale below, soft white flakes of mist still hung over the water meadows, and barred the dark trunks

of the huge elms and poplars, whose fast-yellowing leaves came showering down at the very rustle of the western breeze, spotting the grass below. The river swirled along, glassy no more, but dingy grey with autumn rains and rotten leaves. All beyond the garden told of autumn; bright and peaceful, even in decay: but up the sunny slope of the garden itself, and to the very window sill, summer still lingered. The beds of red verbena and geranium were still brilliant, though choked with fallen leaves of acacia and plane; the canary plant, still untouched by frost, twined its delicate green leaves, and more delicate yellow blossoms, through the crimson lacework of the Virginia-creeper; and the great yellow noisette swung its long canes across the window, filling all the air with fruity fragrance.

And the good Doctor, lifting his eyes from his microscope, looked out upon it all with a quiet satisfaction, and though his lips did not move, his eyes seemed to be thanking God for it all; and thanking Him, too, perhaps, that he was still permitted to gaze upon that fair world outside. For as he gazed, he started, as if with sudden pain, and passed his hand across his eyes, with something like a sigh, and then looked at the microscope no more, but sat, seemingly absorbed in thought, while upon his delicate toil-worn features, and high, bland, unwrinkled forehead, and the few soft grey locks which not time—for he was scarcely fifty-five—but long labour of brain, had spared to him, there lay a hopeful calm, as of a man

who had nigh done his work, and felt that he had not altogether done it ill;—an autumnal calm, resigned, yet full of cheerfulness, which harmonised fitly with the quiet beauty of the decaying landscape before him.

"I say, daddy, you must drop that microscope, and put on your shade. You are ruining those dear old eyes of yours again, in spite of what Alexander told you."

The Doctor took up the green shade which lay beside him, and replaced it with a sigh and a smile.

"I must use the old things now and then, till you can take my place at the microscope, Tom; or till we have, as we ought to have, a first-rate analytical chemist settled in every county-town, and paid, in part at least, out of the county rates."

The "Tom" who had spoken was one of two youths of eighteen, who stood in opposite corners of the bay-window, gazing out upon the landscape, but evidently with thoughts as different as were their complexions.

Tom was of that bull-terrier type so common in England; sturdy, and yet not coarse; middle-sized, deep-chested, broad-shouldered; with small, well-knit hands and feet, large jaw, bright grey eyes, crisp brown hair, a heavy projecting brow; his face full of shrewdness and good-nature, and of humour withal, which might be at whiles a little saucy and sarcastic, to judge from the glances which he sent forth from the corners of his wicked eyes at his companion on

the other side of the window. He was evidently prepared for a day's shooting, in velveteen jacket and leather gaiters, and stood feeling about in his pockets to see whether he had forgotten any of his tackle, and muttering to himself amid his whistling,—"Capital day. How the birds will lie. Where on earth is old Mark? Why must he wait to smoke his cigar after breakfast? Couldn't he have had it in the trap, the blessed old chimney that he is?"

The other lad was somewhat taller than Tom, awkwardly and plainly dressed, but with a highly-developed Byronic turn-down collar, and long black curling locks. He was certainly handsome, as far as the form of his features and brow; and would have been very handsome, but for the bad complexion which at his age so often accompanies a sedentary life, and a melancholic temper. One glance at his face was sufficient to tell that he was moody, shy, restless, perhaps discontented, perhaps ambitious and vain. He held in his hand a volume of Percy's Reliques, which he had just taken down from Thurnall's shelves; yet he was looking not at it, but at the landscape. Nevertheless, as he looked, one might have seen that he was thinking not so much of it as of his own thoughts about it. His eye, which was very large, dark, and beautiful, with heavy lids and long lashes, had that dreamy look so common among men of the poetic temperament; conscious of thought, if not conscious of self; and as his face kindled, and his lips moved more and more earnestly, he began muttering

to himself half-aloud, till Tom Thurnall burst into an open laugh.

"There's Jack at it again! making poetry, I'll bet my head to a China orange."

"And why not?" said his father, looking up quietly, but reprovingly, as Jack winced and blushed, and a dark shade of impatience passed across his face.

"Oh! it's no concern of mine. Let everybody please themselves. The country looks very pretty, no doubt, I can tell that; only my notion is, that a wise man ought to go out and enjoy it—as I am going to do—with a gun on his shoulder, instead of poking at home like a yard-dog, and behowling oneself in po-o-oetry;" and Tom lifted up his voice into a doleful mastiff's howl.

"Then be as good as your word, Tom, and let every one please themselves," said the Doctor; but the dark youth broke out in sudden passion.

"Mr. Thomas Thurnall! I will not endure this! Why are you always making me your butt,—insulting me, sir, even in your father's house? You do not understand me; and I do not care to understand you. If my presence is disagreeable to you, I can easily relieve you of it!" and the dark youth turned to go away, like Naaman, in a rage.

"Stop, John," said the Doctor. "I think it would be the more courteous plan for Tom to relieve you of his presence. Go and find Mark, Tom; and please to remember that John Briggs is my guest, and that I will not allow any rudeness to him in my house."

"I'll go, daddy, to the world's end, if you like, provided you won't ask me to write poetry. But Jack takes offence so soon. Give us your hand, old tinder-box! I meant no harm, and you know it."

John Briggs took the proffered hand sulkily enough; and Tom went out of the glass door, whistling as merry as a cricket.

"My dear boy," said the Doctor, when they were alone, "you must try to curb this temper of yours. Don't be angry with me, but——"

"I should be an ungrateful brute if I was, sir. I can bear anything from you. I ought to, for I owe everything to you; but——"

"But, my dear boy—'better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.'"

John Briggs tapped his foot on the ground impatiently. "I cannot help it, sir. It will drive me mad, I think at times,—this contrast between what I might be, and what I am. I can bear it no longer—mixing medicines here, when I might be educating myself, distinguishing myself—for I can do it; have you not said as much yourself to me again and again?"

"I have, of course; but——"

"But, sir, only hear me. It is in vain to ask me to command my temper while I stay here. I am not fit for this work; not fit for the dull country. I am not appreciated, not understood; and I shall never be, till I can get to London,—till I can find congenial spirits, and take my rightful place in the great parliament of mind. I am Pegasus in harness, here!" cried

the vain, discontented youth. "Let me but once get there,—amid art, civilisation, intellect, and the company of men like that old Mermaid Club, to hear and to answer—

> 'words,
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As one had put his whole soul in a jest;'—

and then you shall see whether Pegasus has not wings, and can use them too!" And he stopped suddenly, choking with emotion, his nostril and chest dilating, his foot stamping impatiently on the ground.

The Doctor watched him with a sad smile.

"Do you remember the devil's temptation of our Lord—'Cast thyself down from hence; for, it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee?'"

"I do; but what has that to do with me?"

"Throw away the safe station in which God has certainly put you, to seek, by some desperate venture, a new, and, as you fancy, a grander one for yourself? Look out of that window, lad; is there not poetry enough, beauty and glory enough, in that sky, those fields,—ay, in every fallen leaf,—to employ all your powers, considerable as I believe them to be? Why spurn the pure, quiet, country life, in which such men as Wordsworth have been content to live and grow old?"

The boy shook his head like an impatient horse. "Too slow—too slow for me, to wait and wait, as Wordsworth did, through long years of obscurity, misconception, ridicule. No. What I have, I must

have at once; and, if it must be, die like Chatterton —if only, like Chatterton, I can have my little day of success, and make the world confess that another priest of the beautiful has arisen among men."

Now, it can scarcely be denied, that the good Doctor was guilty of a certain amount of weakness in listening patiently to all this rant. Not that the rant was very blamable in a lad of eighteen; for have we not all, while we are going through our course of Shelley, talked very much the same abominable stuff, and thought ourselves the grandest fellows upon earth on account of that very length of ear which was patent to all the world save our precious selves; blinded by our self-conceit, and wondering in wrath why everybody was laughing at us? But the truth is, the Doctor was easy and indulgent to a fault, and dreaded nothing so much, save telling a lie, as hurting people's feelings; besides, as the acknowledged wise man of Whitbury, he was a little proud of playing the Mæcenas; and he had, and not unjustly, a high opinion of John Briggs's powers. So he had lent him books, corrected his taste in many matters, and, by dint of petting and humouring, had kept the wayward youth half-a-dozen times from running away from his father, who was an apothecary in the town, and from the general practitioner, Mr. Bolus, under whom John Briggs fulfilled the office of co-assistant with Tom Thurnall. Plenty of trouble had both the lads given the Doctor in the last five years, but of very different kinds. Tom, though he was in everlasting hot water,

as the most incorrigible scapegrace for ten miles round, contrived to confine his naughtiness strictly to play-hours, while he learnt everything which was to be learnt with marvellous quickness, and so utterly fulfilled the ideal of a bottle-boy (for of him, too, as of all things, I presume, an ideal exists eternally in the supra-sensual Platonic universe), that Bolus told his father,—"In hours, sir, he takes care of my business as well as I could myself; but out of hours, sir, I believe he is possessed by seven devils."

John Briggs, on the other hand, sinned in the very opposite direction. Too proud to learn his business, and too proud also to play the scapegrace as Tom did, he neglected alike work and amusement, for lazy mooning over books, and the dreams which books called up. He made perpetual mistakes in the shop; and then considered himself insulted by an "inferior spirit," if poor Bolus called him to account for it. Indeed, had it not been for many applications of that "precious oil of unity," with which the good Doctor daily anointed the creaking wheels of Whitbury society, John Briggs and his master would have long ago "broken out of gear," and parted company in mutual wrath and fury. And now, indeed, the critical moment seemed come at last; for the lad began afresh to declare his deliberate intention of going to London to seek his fortune, in spite of parents and all the world.

"To live on here, and never to rise, perhaps, above the post of correspondent to a country newspaper!—

To publish a volume of poems by subscription and have to go round, hat in hand, begging five shillings' worth of patronage from every stupid country squire —intolerable! I must go! Shakespeare was never Shakespeare till he fled from miserable Stratford, to become at once the friend of Sidney and Southampton."

"But John Briggs will be John Briggs still, if he went to the moon," shouted Tom Thurnall, who had just come up to the window. "I advise you to change that name of yours, Jack, to Sidney, or Percy, or Walker if you like; anything but the illustrious surname of Briggs the poisoner!"

"What do you mean, sir!" thundered John, while the Doctor himself jumped up; for Tom was red with rage.

"What is this, Tom!"

"What's that?" screamed Tom, bursting, in spite of his passion into roars of laughter. "What's that?" —and he held out a phial. "Smell it! taste it! Oh, if I had but a gallon of it to pour down your throat! That's what you brought Mark Armsworth last night, instead of his cough mixture, while your brains were wool-gathering after poetry!"

"What is it?" gasped John Briggs.

"Miss Twiddle's black dose;—strong enough to rive the gizard out of an old cock!"

"It's not!"

"It is!" roared Mark Armsworth from behind as he rushed in, in shooting-jacket and gaiters, his red

face redder with fury, his red whiskers standing on end with wrath like a tiger's, his left hand upon his hapless hypogastric region, his right brandishing an empty glass, which smelt strongly of brandy and water. "It is! And you've given me the cholera, and spoilt my day's shooting; and if I don't serve you out for it there's no law in England!"

"And spoilt my day's shooting, too; the last I shall get before I'm off to Paris! To have a day in Lord Minchampstead's preserves, and to be baulked of it in this way!"

John Briggs stood as one astonied.

"If I don't serve you out for this!" shouted Mark.

"If I don't serve you out for it! You shall never hear the last of it!" shouted Tom. "I'll take to writing, after all. I'll put it in the papers. I'll make the name of Briggs the poisoner an abomination in the land."

John Briggs turned and fled.

"Well!" said Mark, "I must spend my morning at home, I suppose. So I shall just sit and chat with you, Doctor."

"And I shall go and play with Molly," said Tom, and walked off to Armsworth's garden.

"I don't care for myself so much," said Mark; "but I'm sorry the boy's lost his last day's shooting."

"Oh, you will be well enough by noon, and can go then; and as for the boy, it is just as well for him not to grow too fond of sports in which he can never indulge."

"Never indulge? Why not? He vows he'll go to the Rocky Mountains, and shoot a grizzly bear; and he'll do it."

"He has a great deal to do before that, poor fellow; and a great deal to learn."

"And he'll learn it. You're always down-hearted about the boy, Doctor."

"I can't help feeling the parting with him: and for Paris, too:—such a seat of temptation. But it is his own choice; and, after all, he must see temptation, wherever he goes."

"Bless the man! if a boy means to go to the bad, he'll go just as easily in Whitbury as in Paris. Give the lad his head, and never fear; he'll fall on his legs like a cat, I'll warrant him, whatever happens. He's as steady as old Time, I tell you; there's a grey head on green shoulders there."

"Steady?" said the Doctor, with a smile and a shrug.

"Steady, I tell you at heart; as prudent as you or I; and never lost you a farthing, that you know. Hang good boys! give me one who knows how to be naughty in the right place; I wouldn't give sixpence for a good boy; I never was one myself, and have no faith in them. Give me the lad who has more steam up than he knows what to do with, and must needs blow off a little in larks. When once he settles down on the rail, it'll send him along as steady as a luggage train. Did you never hear a locomotive puffing and roaring before it gets under way? well, that's what

your boy is doing. Look at him now, with my poor little Molly."

Tom was cantering about the garden with a little weakly child of eight in his arms. The little thing was looking up in his face with delight, screaming at his jokes.

"You are right, Mark: the boy's heart cannot be in the wrong place while he is so fond of little children."

"Poor Molly! How she'll miss him! Do you think she'll ever walk, Doctor?"

"I do indeed."

"Hum! ah! well! if she grows up, Doctor, and don't go to join her poor dear mother up there, I don't know that I'd wish her a better husband than your boy."

"It would be a poor enough match for her."

"Tut! she'll have the money, and he the brains. Mark my words, Doctor, that boy'll be a credit to you; he'll make a noise in the world, or I know nothing. And if his fancy holds seven years hence, and he wants still to turn traveller, let him. If he's minded to go round the world, I'll back him to go, somehow or other, or I'll eat my head, Ned Thurnall!"

The Doctor acquiesced in this hopeful theory, partly to save an argument; for Mark's reverence for his opinion was confined to scientific matters; and he made up to his own self-respect by patronising the Doctor, and, indeed, taking him sometimes pretty sharply to task on practical matters.

"Best fellow alive is Thurnall; but not a man of business, poor fellow. None of your geniuses are. Don't know what he'd do without me."

So Tom carried Mary about all the morning, and went to Minchampstead in the afternoon, and got three hours' good shooting; but in the evening he vanished; and his father went into Armsworth's to look for him.

"Why do you want to know where he is?" replied Mark, looking sly. "However, as you can't stop him now, I'll tell you. He is just about this time sewing up Briggs's coat-sleeves, putting copperas into his water jug, and powdered galls on his towel, and making various other little returns for this morning's favour."

"I dislike practical jokes."

"So do I; especially when they come in the form of a black dose. Sit down, old boy, and we'll have a game at cribbage."

"In a few minutes Tom came in—"Here's a good riddance. The poisoner has fabricated his pilgrim's staff, to speak scientifically, and perambulated his calcareous strata."

"What!"

"Cut his stick, and walked his chalks; and is off to London."

"Poor boy," said the Doctor, much distressed.

"Don't cry, daddy; you can't bring him back again. He's been gone these four hours. I went to his room, at Bolus's, about a little business, and saw at once that he had packed up, and carried off all he

could. And, looking about, I found a letter directed to his father. So to his father I took it; and really I was sorry for the poor people. I left them all crying in chorus."

"I must go to them at once;" and up rose the Doctor.

"He's not worth the trouble you take for him—the addle-headed, ill-tempered coxcomb," said Mark. "But it's just like your soft-heartedness. Tom, sit down, and finish the game with me."

So vanished from Whitbury, with all his aspirations, poor John Briggs; and save an occasional letter to his parents, telling them that he was alive and well, no one heard anything of him for many a year. The Doctor tried to find him out in London, again and again; but without success. His letters had no address upon them, and no clue to his whereabouts could be found.

And Tom Thurnall went to Paris, and became the best pistol-shot and billiard-player in the Quartier Latin; and then went to St. Mumpsimus's Hospital in London, and became the best boxer therein, and captain of the eight-oar, besides winning prizes and certificates without end, and becoming in due time the most popular house-surgeon in the hospital: but nothing could keep him permanently at home. Stay drudging in London he would not. Settle down in a country practice he would not. Cost his father a farthing he would not. So he started forth into the wide world with nothing but his wits and his science,

as anatomical professor to a new college in some South American republic. Unfortunately, when he got there, he found that the annual revolution had just taken place, and that the party who had founded the college had been all shot the week before. Whereat he whistled, and started off again, no man knew whither.

"Having got round half the world, daddy," he wrote home, "it's hard if I don't get round the other half. So don't expect me till you see me; and take care of your dear old eyes."

With which he vanished into infinite space, and was only heard of by occasional letters dated from the Rocky Mountains (where he did shoot a grizzly bear), the Spanish West Indies, Otahiti, Singapore, the Falkland Islands, and all manner of unexpected places; sending home valuable notes (sometimes accompanied by valuable specimens), zoological and botanical; and informing his father that he was doing very well; that work was plentiful, and that he always found two fresh jobs before he had finished one old one.

His eldest brother, John, died meanwhile. His second brother, William, was in good general practice in Manchester. His father's connections supported him comfortably; and if the old Doctor ever longed for Tom to come home, he never hinted it to the wanderer, but bade him go on and prosper, and become (which he gave high promise of becoming) a distinguished man of science. Nevertheless the old

man's heart sank at last, when month after month, and at last two full years, had passed without any letter from Tom.

At last, when full four years were past and gone since Tom started for South America, he descended from the box of the day-mail, with a serene and healthful countenance; and with no more look of interest in his face than if he had been away on a two days' visit, shouldered his carpet-bag, and started for his father's house. He stopped, however; as there appeared from the inside of the mail a face which he must surely know. A second look told him that it was none other than John Briggs But how altered! He had grown up into a very handsome man,—tall and delicate-featured, with long black curls, and a black moustache. There was a slight stoop about his shoulders, as of a man accustomed to too much sitting and writing; and he carried an eye-glass, whether for fashion's sake, or for his eyes' sake, was uncertain. He was wrapt in a long Spanish cloak, new and good; wore well-cut trousers, and (what Tom, of course, examined carefully) French boots, very neat, and very thin. Moreover, he had lavender kid-gloves on. Tom looked and wondered, and walked half round him, sniffing like a dog when he examines into the character of a fellow dog.

"Hum!—his mark seems to be at present P P.—prosperous party: so there can be no harm in renewing our acquaintance. What trade on earth does he live by, though? Editor of a newspaper? or keeper of a

gambling-table? Begging his pardon, he looks a good deal more like the latter than the former. However——"

And he walked up and offered his hand, with "How d'e do, Briggs? Who would have thought of our falling from the skies against each other in this fashion?"

Mr. Briggs hesitated a moment, and then took coldly the offered hand.

"Excuse me; but the circumstances of my visit here are too painful to allow me to wish for society."

And Mr. Briggs withdrew, evidently glad to escape.

"Has he vampoosed with the contents of a till, that he wishes so for solitude?" asked Tom; and, shouldering his carpet-bag a second time, with a grim inward laugh, he went to his father's house, and hung up his hat in the hall, just as if he had come in from a walk, and walked into the study; and not finding the old man, stepped through the garden to Mark Armsworth's, and in at the drawing-room window, frightening out of her wits a short, pale, ugly girl of seventeen, whom he discovered to be his old playfellow, Mary. However, she soon recovered her equanimity: he certainly never lost his.

"How d'e do, darling? How you are grown! and how well you look! How's your father? I hadn't anything particular to do, so I thought I'd come home and see you all, and get some fishing."

And Mary, who had longed to throw her arms round his neck, as of old, and was restrained by the

thought that she was grown a great girl now, called in her father, and all the household; and after a while the old Doctor came home, and the fatted calf was killed, and all made merry over the return of this altogether unrepentant prodigal son, who, whether from affectation, or from that blunted sensibility which often comes by continual change and wandering, took all their affection and delight with the most provoking coolness.

Nevertheless, though his feelings were not "demonstrative," as fine ladies say now-a-days, he evidently had some left in some corner of his heart; for after the fatted calf was eaten, and they were all settled in the Doctor's study, it came out that his carpet-bag contained little but presents, and those valuable ones —rare minerals from the Ural for his father; a pair of Circassian pistols for Mark; and for little Mary, to her astonishment, a Russian malachite bracelet, at which Mary's eyes opened wide, and old Mark said—

"Pretty fellow you are, to go fooling your money away like that. What did that gimcrack cost, pray, sir?"

"That is no concern of yours, sir, or mine either; for I didn't pay for it."

"Oh!" said Mary, doubtingly.

"No, Mary. I killed a giant, who was carrying off a beautiful princess; and this, you see, he wore as a ring on one of his fingers: so I thought it would just suit your wrist."

"Oh, Tom—Mr. Thurnall—what nonsense!"

"Come, come," said his father: "instead of telling us these sort of stories, you ought to give an account of yourself, as you seem quite to forget that we have not heard from you for more than two years."

"Whew! I wrote," said Tom, "whenever I could. However, you can have all my letters in one now."

So they sat round the fire, and Tom gave an account of himself; while his father marked with pride that the young man had grown and strengthened in body and in mind; and that under that nonchalant, almost cynical outside, the heart still beat honest and kindly. For before Tom began, he would needs draw his chair closer to his father's, and half-whispered to him,—

"This is very jolly. I can't be sentimental, you know. Knocking about the world has beat all that out of me: but it is very comfortable, after all, to find oneself with a dear old daddy and a good coal fire."

"Which of the two could you best do without?"

"Well, one takes things as one finds them. It don't do to look too deeply into one's feelings. Like chemicals, the more you analyse them, the worse they smell"

So Tom began his story.

"You heard from me at Bombay; after I'd been up to the Himalaya with an old Mumpsimus friend?"

"Yes."

"Well, I worked my way to Suez on board a ship whose doctor had fallen ill; and then I must needs

see a little of Egypt; and there robbed was I, and nearly murdered, too; but I take a good deal of killing."

"I'll warrant you do," said Mark, looking at him with pride.

"So I begged my way to Cairo; and there I picked up a Yankee—a New Yorker, made of money, who had a yacht at Alexandria, and travelled *en prince;* and nothing would serve him but I must go with him to Constantinople; but there he and I quarrelled—more fools, both of us! I wrote to you from Constantinople."

"We never got the letter."

"I can't help that; I wrote. But there I was on the wide world again. So I took up with a Russian prince, whom I met at a gambling-table in Pera,—a mere boy, but such a plucky one,—and went with him to Circassia, and up to Astrakhan, and on to the Kirghis steppes; and there I did see snakes."

"Snakes?" says Mary. "I should have thought you had seen plenty in India already."

"Yes, Mary! but these were snakes spiritual and metaphorical. For, poking about where we had no business, Mary, the Tartars caught us, and tied us to their horses' tails, after giving me this scar across the cheek, and taught us to drink mares' milk, and to do a good deal of dirty work beside. So there we stayed with them six months, and observed their manners, which were none, and their customs, which were disgusting, as the midshipman said in his diary; and had

the honour of visiting a pleasant little place in No-man's Land, called Khiva, which you may find in your atlas, Mary; and of very nearly being sold for slaves into Persia, which would not have been pleasant; and at last, Mary, we ran away—or rather, rode away, on two razor-backed Calmuc ponies, and got back to Russia, *vid* Orenberg,—for which consult your atlas again; so the young prince was restored to the bosom of his afflicted family; and a good deal of trouble I had to get him safe there, for the poor boy's health gave way. They wanted me to stay with them, and offered to make my fortune."

"I'm so glad you didn't," said Mary.

"Well—I wanted to see little Mary again, and two worthy old gentlemen beside, you see. However, those Russians are generous enough. They filled my pockets, and heaped me with presents; that bracelet among them. What's more, Mary, I've been introduced to old Nick himself, and can testify, from personal experience, to the correctness of Shakspeare's opinion that the prince of darkness is a gentleman."

"And now you are going to stay at home?" asked the Doctor.

"Well, if you'll take me in, daddy, I'll send for my traps from London, and stay a month or so."

"A month!" cried the forlorn father.

"Well, daddy, you see, there is a chance of more fighting in Mexico, and I shall see such practice there; beside meeting old friends who were with me in Texas.

And—and I've got a little commission, too, down in Georgia, that I should like to go and do."

"What is that?"

"Well,—it's a long story and a sad one: but there was a poor Yankee surgeon with the army in Circassia —a Southerner, and a very good fellow; and he had taken a fancy to some coloured girl at home—poor fellow, he used to go half mad about her sometimes, when he was talking to me, for fear she should have been sold—sent to the New Orleans market, or some other devilry; and what could I say to comfort him? Well, he got his mittimus by one of Schamyl's bullets; and when he was dying, he made me promise (I hadn't the heart to refuse) to take all his savings, which he had been hoarding for years for no other purpose, and see if I couldn't buy the girl, and get her away to Canada. I was a fool for promising. It was no concern of mine; but the poor fellow wouldn't die in peace else. So what must be, must."

"Oh, go! go!" said Mary. "You will let him go, Doctor Thurnall, and see the poor girl free? Think how dreadful it must be to be a slave."

"I will, my little Miss Mary; and for more reasons than you think of. Little do you know how dreadful it is to be a slave."

"Hum!" said Mark Armsworth. "That's a queer story. Tom, have you got the poor fellow's money? Didn't lose it when you were taken by those Tartars?"

"Not I. I wasn't so green as to carry it with me.

It ought to have been in England six months ago. My only fear is, it's not enough."

"Hum!" said Mark. "How much more do you think you'll want?"

"Heaven knows. There is a thousand dollars; but if she be half as beautiful as poor Wyse used to swear she was, I may want more than double that."

"If you do, pay it, and I'll pay you again. No, by George!" said Mark, "no one shall say that while Mark Armsworth had a balance at his bankers' he let a poor girl——" and, recollecting Mary's presence, he finished his sentence by sundry stamps and thumps on the table.

"You would soon exhaust your balance, if you set to work to free all poor girls who are in the same case in Georgia," said the Doctor.

"Well, what of that? Them I don't know of, and so I ain't responsible for them; but this one I do know of, and so—there, I can't argue; but, Tom, if you want the money, you know where to find it."

"Very good. By the by—I forgot it till this moment—who should come down in the coach with me but the lost John Briggs."

"He is come too late, then," said the Doctor. "His poor father died this morning."

"Ah! then Briggs knew that he was ill? That explains the Manfredic mystery and gloom with which he greeted me."

"I cannot tell. He has written from time to time,

but he has never given any address; so that no one could write in return."

"He may have known. He looked very downcast. Perhaps that explains his cutting me dead."

"Cut you?" cried Mark. "I dare say he's been doing something he's ashamed of, and don't want to be recognised. That fellow has been after no good all this while, I'll warrant. I always say he's connected with the swell mob, or croupier at a gambling-table, or something of that kind. Don't you think it's likely, now?"

Mark was in the habit of so saying for the purpose of tormenting the Doctor, who held stoutly to his old belief, that John Briggs was a very clever man, and would turn up some day as a distinguished literary character.

"Well," said Tom, "honest or not, he's thriving; came down inside the coach, dressed in the distinguished foreigner style, with lavender kid gloves, and French boots."

"Just like a swell pickpocket," said Mark. "I always told you so, Thurnall."

"He had the old Byron collar, and Raphael hair, though."

"Nasty, effeminate, un-English foppery," grumbled Mark; "so he may be in the scribbling line after all."

"I'll go and see if I can find him," quoth the Doctor.

"Bother you," said Mark, "always running out o' nights after somebody else's business, instead of having

a jolly evening. You stay, Tom, like a sensible fellow, and tell me and Mary some more travellers' lies. Had much sporting, boy?"

"Hum! I've shot and hunted every beast, I think, shootable and huntable, from a humming-bird to an elephant; and I had some splendid fishing in Canada; but, after all, give me a Whitbury trout, on a single-handed Chevalier. We'll at them to-morrow, Mr. Armsworth."

"We will, my boy! never so many fish in the river as this year, or in season so early."

The good Doctor returned; but with no news which could throw light on the history of the now mysterious Mr. John Briggs. He had locked himself into the room with his father's corpse, evidently in great excitement and grief; spent several hours in walking up and down there alone; and had then gone to an attorney in the town, and settled everything about the funeral "in the handsomest way," said the man of law; "and was quite the gentleman in his manner, but not much of a man of business; never had even thought of looking for his father's will; and was quite surprised when I told him that there ought to be a fair sum—eight hundred or a thousand, perhaps, to come in to him, if the stock and business were properly disposed of. So he went off to London by the evening mail, and told me to address him to the post-office in some street off the Strand. Queer business, sir, isn't it?"

John Briggs did not reappear till a few minutes

before his father's funeral, witnessed the ceremony evidently with great sorrow, bowed off silently all who attempted to speak to him, and returned to London by the next coach—leaving matter for much babble among all Whitbury gossips. One thing at least was plain, that he wished to be forgotten in his native town; and forgotten he was, in due course of time.

Tom Thurnall stayed his month at home, and then went to America; whence he wrote home, in about six months, a letter, of which only one paragraph need interest us.

"Tell Mark I have no need for his dollars. I have done the deed; and, thanks to the underground railway, done it nearly gratis; which was both cheaper than buying her, and infinitely better for me; so that she has all poor Wyse's dollars to start with afresh in Canada. I write this from New York. I could accompany her no farther; for I must get back to the South in time for the Mexican expedition."

Then came a long and anxious silence; and then a letter, not from Mexico but from California,—one out of several which had been posted; and then letters, more regularly from Australia. Sickened with Californian life, he had crossed the Pacific once more, and was hard at work in the diggings, doctoring and gold-finding by turns.

"A rolling stone gathers no moss," said his father.

"He has the pluck of a hound, and the cunning of a fox," said Mark; "and he'll be a credit to you yet."

And Mary prayed every morning and night for her old playfellow; and so the years slipped on till the autumn of 1853.

As no one has heard of Tom now for eight months and more (the pulse of Australian postage being of a somewhat intermittent type), we may as well go and look for him.

A sheet of dark rolling ground, quarried into a gigantic rabbit burrow, with hundreds of tents and huts dotted about among the heaps of rubbish; dark evergreen forests in the distance, and, above all, the great volcanic mountain of Buninyong towering far aloft—these are the "Black Hills of Ballarat;" and that windlass at that shaft's mouth belongs in part to Thomas Thurnall.

At the windlass are standing two men, whom we may have seen in past years, self-satisfied in countenance, and spotless in array, sauntering down Piccadilly any July afternoon, or lounging in Haggis's stable-yard at Cambridge any autumn morning. Alas! how changed from the fast young undergraduates, with powers of enjoyment only equalled by their powers of running into debt, are those two black-bearded and mud-bespattered ruffians, who once were Smith and Brown of Trinity. Yet who need pity them, as long as they have stouter limbs, healthier stomachs, and clearer consciences, than they have had since they left Eton at seventeen? Would Smith have been a happier man as a briefless barrister in a dingy Inn of Law, peeping now and then into third-rate London society,

and scribbling for the daily press! Would Brown have been a happier man had he been forced into those holy orders for which he never felt the least vocation, to pay off his college debts out of his curate's income, and settle down on his lees, at last, in the family living of Nomansland-cum-Clayhole, and support a wife and five children on five hundred a-year, exclusive of rates and taxes? Let them dig, and be men.

The windlass rattles and the rope goes down. A shout from the bottom of the shaft proclaims all right; and in due time, sitting in the noose of the rope, up comes Thomas Thurnall, bare-footed and bare-headed, in flannel trousers and red jersey, begrimed with slush and mud; with a mahogany face, a brick-red neck, and a huge brown beard, looking, to use his own expression, "as jolly as a sandboy."

"A letter for you, Doctor, from Europe."

Tom takes it, and his countenance falls; for it is black-edged and black-sealed. The handwriting is Mary Armsworth's.

"I suppose the old lady who is going to leave me a fortune is dead," says he drily, and turns away to read.

"Bad luck, I suppose," he says to himself. "I have not had any for full six months, so I suppose it is time for Dame Fortune to give me a sly stab again. I only hope it is not my father; for, begging the Dame's pardon, I can bear any trick of hers but that." And he sets his teeth doggedly, and reads.

"My dear Mr. Thurnall,—My father would have written himself, but he thought, I don't know why, that I could tell you better than he. Your father is quite well in health,"—Thurnall breathes freely again —"but he has had heavy trials since your poor brother William's death."

Tom opens his eyes and sets his teeth more firmly. "Willy dead? I suppose there is a letter lost: better so; better to have the whole list of troubles together, and so get them sooner over. Poor Will!"

"Your father caught the scarlet fever from him, while he was attending him, and was very ill after he came back. He is quite well again now; but if I must tell you the truth, the disease has affected his eyes. You know how weak they always were, and how much worse they have grown of late years; and the doctors are afraid that he has little chance of recovering the sight, at least of the left eye."

"Recovering? He's blind, then." And Tom set his teeth more tightly than ever. He felt a sob rise in his throat, but choked it down, shaking his head like an impatient bull.

"Wait a bit, Tom," said he to himself, "before you have it out with Dame Fortune. There's more behind, I'll warrant. News like this lies in pockets, and not in single nuggets." And he read on—

"And—for it is better you should know all—something has happened to the railroad in which he had invested so much. My father has lost money in it also; but not much: but I fear that your poor dear

father is very much straitened. My father is dreadfully vexed about it, and thinks it all his fault in not having watched the matter more closely, and made your father sell out in time: and he wants your father to come and live with us: but he will not hear of it. So he has given up the old house, and taken one in Water Street, and, oh! I need not tell you that we are there every day, and that I am trying to make him as happy as I can—but what can I do? And then followed kind womanly commonplaces, which Tom hurried over with fierce impatience.

"He wants you to come home; but my father has entreated him to let you stay. You know, while we are here, he is safe; and my father begs you not to come home, if you are succeeding as well as you have been doing."

There was much more in the letter, which I need not repeat; and, after all, a short postscript, by Mark himself, followed:—

"Stay where you are, boy, and keep up heart; while I have a pound, your father shall have half of it; and you know Mark Armsworth."

He walked away slowly into the forest. He felt that the crisis of his life was come; that he must turn his hand henceforth to quite new work; and as he went he "took stock," as it were, of his own soul, to see what point he had attained—what he could do.

Fifteen years of adventure had hardened into wrought metal a character never very ductile. Tom was now, in his own way, an altogether accomplished

man of the world, who knew (at least in all companies and places where he was likely to find himself) exactly what to say, to do, to make, to seek, and to avoid. Shifty and thrifty as old Greek, or modern Scot, there were few things he could not invent, and perhaps nothing he could not endure. He had watched human nature under every disguise, from the pomp of the ambassador to the war-paint of the savage, and formed his own clear, hard, shallow, practical estimate thereof. He looked on it as his raw material, which he had to work up into subsistence and comfort for himself. He did not wish to live on men, but live by them he must; and for that purpose he must study them, and especially their weaknesses. He would not cheat them; for there was in him an innate vein of honesty, so surly and explosive, at times, as to give him much trouble. The severest part of his self-education had been the repression of his dangerous inclination to call a sham a sham on the spot, and to answer fools according to their folly. That youthful rashness, however, was now well-nigh subdued, and Tom could flatter and bully also, when it served his turn—as who cannot? Let him that is without sin among my readers, cast the first stone. Self-conscious he was, therefore, in every word and action; not from morbid vanity, but a necessary consequence of his mode of life. He had to use men, and therefore to watch how he used them; to watch every word, gesture, tone of voice, and, in all times and places, do the fitting thing. It was hard work: but necessary

for a man who stood alone and self-poised in the mi of the universe; fashioning for himself everywh just as far as his arm could reach, some not intolera condition; depending on nothing but himself, and caring for little but himself and the father whom, to do him justice, he never forgot. If I wished to define Tom Thurnall by one epithet, I should call him specially an ungodly man—were it not that scriptural epithets have, now-a-days, such altogether conventional and official meanings, that one fears to convey, in using them, some notion quite foreign to the truth. Tom was certainly not one of those ungodly whom David had to deal with of old, who robbed the widow, and put the fatherless to death. His morality was as high as that of the average; his sense of honour far higher. He was generous and kind-hearted. No one ever heard him tell a lie; and he had a blunt honesty about him, half real, because he liked to be honest, and yet half affected too, because he found it pay in the long run, and because it threw off their guard the people whom he intended to make his tools. But of godliness in its true sense—of belief that any Being above cared for him, and was helping him in the daily business of life—that it was worth while asking that Being's advice, or that any advice would be given if asked for; of any practical notion of a Heavenly Father, or a Divine education—Tom was as ignorant as thousands of respectable people who go to church every Sunday, and read good books, and believe firmly that the Pope is Antichrist. He ought to have learnt

it, no doubt; for his father was a religious man: but he had not learnt it—any more than thousands learn it, who have likewise religious parents. He had been taught, of course, the common doctrines and duties of religion; but early remembrances had been rubbed out, as off a schoolboy's slate, by the mere current of new thoughts and objects, in his continual wanderings. Disappointments he had had, and dangers in plenty; but only such as rouse a brave and cheerful spirit to bolder self-reliance and invention; not those deep sorrows of the heart which leave a man helpless in the lowest pit, crying for help from without, for there is none within. He had seen men of all creeds, and had found in all alike (so he held) the many rogues, and the few honest men. All religions were, in his eyes, equally true and equally false. Superior morality was owing principally to the influences of race and climate; and devotional experiences (to judge, at least, from American camp-meetings and popish cities) the results of a diseased nervous system.

Upon a man so hard and strong this fearful blow had fallen, and, to do him justice, he took it like a man. He wandered on and on for an hour or more, up the hills, and into the forest, talking to himself.

"Poor old Willy! I should have liked to have looked into his honest face before he went, if only to make sure that we were good friends. I used to plague him sadly with my tricks. But what is the use of wishing for what cannot be? I recollect I had just the same feeling when John died; and yet I got

over it after a time, and was as cheerful as if he were alive again, or had never lived at all. And so I shall get over this. Why should I give way to what I know will pass, and is meant to pass? It is my father I feel for. But I couldn't be there; and it is no fault of mine that I was not there. No one told me what was going to happen; and no one could know: so again,—why grieve over what can't be helped?"

And then, to give the lie to all his cool arguments, he sat down among the fern, and burst into a violent fit of crying. "Oh, my poor dear old daddy!"

Yes; beneath all the hard crust of years, that fountain of life still lay pure as when it came down from heaven—love for his father.

"Come, come, this won't do; this is not the way to take stock of my goods, either mental or worldly. I can't cry the dear old man out of this scrape."

He looked up. The sun was setting. Beneath the dark roof of evergreens the eucalyptus boles stood out, like basalt pillars, black against a background of burning flame. The flying foxes shot from tree to tree, and moths as big as sparrows whirred about the trunks, one moment black against the glare beyond, and vanishing the next, like imps of darkness, into their native gloom. There was no sound of living thing around, save the ghastly rattle of the dead bark-tassels which swung from every tree, and far away, the faint clicking of the diggers at their work, like the rustle of a gigantic ant-hill. Was there one

among them all who cared for him? who would not forget him in a week with—"Well, he was pleasant company, poor fellow," and go on digging without a sigh? What, if it were his fate to die, as he had seen many a stronger man, there in that lonely wilderness, and sleep for ever, unhonoured and unknown, beneath that awful forest roof, while his father looked for bread to others' hands?

No man was less sentimental, no man less superstitious than Thomas Thurnall; but crushed and softened—all but terrified (as who would not have been?)—by that day's news, he could not struggle against the weight of loneliness which fell upon him. For the first and last time, perhaps, in his life, he felt fear; a vague, awful dread of unseen and inevitable possibilities. Why should not calamity fall on him, wave after wave? Was it not falling on him already? Why should he not grow sick to-morrow, break his leg, his neck—why not? What guarantee had he in earth or heaven that he might not be "snuffed out silently," as he had seen hundreds already, and die and leave no sign? And there sprang up in him at once the intensest yearning after his father and the haunts of his boyhood, and the wildest dread that he should never see them. Might not his father be dead ere he could return?—if ever he did return. That twelve thousand miles of sea looked to him a gulf impassable. Oh, that he were safe at home! that he could start that moment! And for one minute a helplessness, as of a lost child, came over him.

Perhaps it had been well for him had he given that feeling vent, and, confessing himself a lost child, cried out of the darkness to a Father; but the next minute he had dashed it proudly away.

"Pretty baby I am, to get frightened, at my time of life, because I find myself in a dark wood—and the sun shining all the while as jollily as ever away there in the west! It is morning somewhere or other now, and it will be morning here again to-morrow. 'Good times and bad times, and all times pass over;' —I learnt that lesson out of old Bewick's vignettes, and it has stood me in good stead this many a year, and shall now. Die? Nonsense. I take more killing than that comes to. So for one more bout with old Damê Fortune. If she throws me again, why, I'll get up again, as I have any time these fifteen years. Mark's right. I'll stay here and work till I make a hit, or luck runs dry, and then home and settle; and, meanwhile, I'll go down to Melbourne to-morrow, and send the dear old man two hundred pounds; and then back again here, and to it again."

And with a fate-defiant smile, half bitter and half cheerful, Tom rose and went down again to his mates, and stopped their inquiries by—"What's done can't be mended, and needn't be mentioned; whining won't make me work the harder, and harder than ever I must work."

Strange it is, how mortal man, "who cometh up and is cut down like the flower," can thus harden himself into stoical security, and count on the morrow,

which may never come. Yet so it is; and, perhaps, if it were not so, no work would get done on earth, —at least by the many who know not that God is guiding them, while they fancy that they are guiding themselves.

CHAPTER II.

STILL LIFE.

I MUST now, if I am to bring you to "Two years ago," and to my story, as it was told to me, ask you to follow me into the good old West Country, and set you down at the back of an old harbour pier; thirty feet of grey and brown boulders, spotted aloft with bright yellow lichens, and black drops of tar, polished lower down by the surge of centuries, and towards the foot of the wall roughened with crusts of barnacles, and mussel-nests in crack and cranny, and festoons of coarse dripping weed.

On a low rock at its foot, her back resting against the Cyclopean wall, sits a young woman of eight-and-twenty, soberly, almost primly dressed, with three or four tiny children clustering round her. In front of them, on a narrow spit of sand between the rocks, a dozen little girls are laughing, romping, and pattering about, turning the stones for "shannies" and "bullies," and other luckless fish left by the tide; while the party beneath the pier wall look steadfastly down into a little rock-pool at their feet,—full of the pink and green and purple cut-work of delicate weeds and

coralline, and starred with great sea-dahlias, crimson and brown and grey, and with the waving snake-locks of the Cereus, pale blue, and rose-tipped like the fingers of the dawn. One delicate Medusa is sliding across the pool, by slow pantings of its crystal bell; and on it the eyes of the whole group are fixed,—for it seems to be the subject of some story which the village schoolmistress is finishing in a sweet, half-abstracted voice,—

"And so the cruel soldier was changed into a great rough red starfish, who goes about killing the poor mussels, while nobody loves him, or cares to take his part; and the poor little girl was changed into a beautiful bright jelly-fish, like that one, who swims about all day in the pleasant sunshine, with a red cross stamped on its heart."

"Oh, mistress, what a pretty story!" cry the little ones, with tearful eyes. "And what shall we be changed to when we die?"

"If we will only be good we shall go up to Jesus, and be beautiful angels, and sing hymns. Would that it might be soon, soon; for you and me, and all!" And she draws the children to her, and looks upward, as if longing to bear them with her aloft.

Let us leave the conversation where it is, and look into the face of the speaker, who, young as she is, has already meditated so long upon the mystery of death that it has grown lovely in her eyes.

Her figure is tall, graceful, and slight, the severity of its outlines suiting well with the severity of her

dress, with the brown stuff gown and plain grey whittle. Her neck is long, almost too long: but all defects are forgotten in the first look at her face. We can see it fully, for her bonnet lies beside her on the rock.

The masque, though thin, is perfect. The brow, like that of Greek statue, looks lower than it really is, for the hair springs from below the bend of the forehead. The brain is very long, and sweeps backward and upward in grand curves, till it attains above the ears a great expanse and height. She should be a character more able to feel than to argue; full of all a woman's veneration, devotion, love of children,—perhaps, too, of a woman's anxiety.

The nose is slightly aquiline; the sharp-cut nostrils indicate a reserve of compressed strength and passion; the mouth is delicate; the lips, which are full and somewhat heavy, not from coarseness, but rather from languor, show somewhat of both the upper and the under teeth. Her eyes are bent on the pool at her feet; so that we can see nothing of them but the large sleepy lids, fringed with lashes so long and dark that the eye looks as if it had been painted, in the Eastern fashion, with antimony; the dark lashes, dark eyebrows, dark hair, crisped (as West-country hair so often is) to its very roots, increase the almost ghost-like paleness of the face, not sallow, not snow-white, but of a clear, bloodless, waxen hue.

And now she lifts her eyes,—dark eyes, of preternatural largeness; brilliant, too, but not with the

sparkle of the diamond; brilliant as deep clear wells are, in which the mellow moonlight sleeps fathom-deep between black walls of rock; and round them, and round the wide-opened lips, and arching eyebrow, and slightly wrinkled forehead, hangs an air of melancholy thought, vague doubt, almost of startled fear; then that expression passes, and the whole face collapses into a languor of patient sadness, which seems to say,—"I cannot solve the mystery. Let Him solve it as seems good to Him."

The pier has, as usual, two stages; the upper and narrower for a public promenade, the lower and broader one for business. Two rough collier-lads, strangers to the place, are lounging on the wall above, and begin, out of mere mischief, dropping pebbles on the group below.

"Hillo! you young rascals," calls an old man lounging like them on the wall; "if you don't drop that, you're likely to get your heads broken."

"Will you do it?"

"I would thirty years ago; but I'll find a dozen in five minutes who will do it now. Here, lads! here's two Welsh vagabonds pelting our schoolmistress."

This is spoken to a group of Sea-Titans, who are sitting about on the pier-way behind him, in red caps, blue jackets, striped jerseys, bright brown trousers, and all the picturesque comfort of a fisherman's costume, superintending the mending of a boat.

Up jump half-a-dozen off the logs and baulkings,

where they have been squatting, doubled up knee to nose, after the fashion of their class, and a volley of execrations, like a storm of grape, almost blows the two offenders off the wall. The bolder, however, lingers, anathematising in turn; whereon a black-bearded youth, some six feet four in height, catches up an oar, makes a sweep at the shins of the lad above his head, and brings him writhing down upon the upper pier-way, whence he walks off howling, and muttering threats of "taking the law." In vain;—there is not a magistrate within ten miles; and custom, Lynch-law, and the coast-guard lieutenant, settle all matters in Aberalva town, and do so easily enough; for the petty crimes which fill our gaols are all unknown among those honest Vikings' sons; and any man who covets his neighbour's goods, instead of stealing them has only to go and borrow them, on condition, of course, of lending in his turn.

"What's that collier-lad hollering about, Captain Willis?" asks Mr. Tardrew, steward to Lord Scoutbush, landlord of Aberalva, as he comes up to the old man.

"Gentleman Jan cut him over, for pelting the schoolmistress below here."

"Serve him right; he'll have to cut over that curate next, I reckon."

"Oh, Mr. Tardrew, don't you talk so; the young gentleman is as kind a man as I ever saw, and comes in and out of our house like a lamb."

"Wolf in sheep's clothing," growls Tardrew.

"What d'ye think he says to me last week? Wanted to turn the schoolmistress out of her place because she went to chapel sometimes."

"I know, I know," replied Willis, in the tone of a man who wished to avoid a painful subject. "And what did you answer, then, Mr. Tardrew?"

"I told him he might if he liked; but he'd make the place too hot to hold him, if he hadn't done it already, with his bowings and his crossings, and his chantings, and his Popish Gregories,—and tells one he's no Papist; called him Pope Gregory himself. What do we want with popes' tunes here, instead of the Old Hundredth and Martyrdom? I should like to see any Pope of the lot make a tune like them."

Captain Willis listened with a face half sad, half slily amused. He and Tardrew were old friends; being the two most notable persons in the parish, save Jones the lieutenant, Heale the doctor, and another gentleman, of whom we shall speak presently. Both of them too, were thorough-going Protestants, and though Churchmen, walked sometimes into the Brianite Chapel of an afternoon, and thought it no sin. But each took the curate's "Puseyism" in a different way, being two men as unlike each other as one could well find.

Tardrew—steward to Lord Scoutbush, the absentee landlord,—was a shrewd, hard-bitten, choleric old fellow, of the shape, colour, and consistence of a red brick; one of those English types which Mr. Emerson

has so well hit off in his rather confused and contradictory "Traits:"—

"He hides virtues under vices, or, rather, under the semblance of them. It is the misshapen, hairy, Scandinavian Troll again who lifts the cart out of the mire, or threshes the corn which ten day-labourers could not end: but it is done in the dark, and with muttered maledictions. He is a churl with a soft place in his heart, whose speech is a brash of bitter waters, but who loves to help you at a pinch. He says, No; and serves you, and his thanks disgust you." Such was Tardrew,—a true British bull-dog, who lived pretty faithfully up to his Old Testament, but had, somehow, forgotten the existence of the New.

Willis was a very different and a very much nobler person; the most perfect specimen which I ever have met (for I knew him well, and loved him) of that type of British sailor which good Captain Marryat has painted in his Masterman Ready, and painted far better than I can, even though I do so from life. A tall and graceful old man, though stooping much from lumbago and old wounds; with snow-white hair and whiskers, delicate aquiline features, the manners of a nobleman, and the heart of a child. All children knew that latter fact, and clung to him instinctively. Even "the Boys," that terrible Berserk-tribe, self-organised, self-dependent, and bound together in common iniquities and the dread of common retribution, who were in Aberalva, as all fishing towns,

the torment and terror of all douce fogies, male and female,—even the Boys, I say, respected Captain Willis, so potent was the influence of his gentleness; nailed not up his shutters, nor tied fishing-lines across his doorway; tail-piped not his dog, nor sent his cat to sea on a barrel-stave; nor put live crabs into his pocket, nor dead dog-fish into his well; yea, even when judgment, too long provoked, made bare her red right hand, and the lieutenant vowed by his commission that he would send half-a-dozen of them to the treadmill, they would send up a deputation to "beg Captain Willis to beg the schoolmistress to beg them off." For between Willis and that fair young creature a friendship had grown up, easily to be understood. Willis was one of those rare natures upon whose purity no mire can cling; who pass through the furnace, and yet not even the smell of fire has passed upon them. Bred, almost born, on board a smuggling cutter, in the old war-times; then hunting, in the old coast-blockade service, the smugglers among whom he had been trained; watching the slow horrors of the Walcheren; fighting under Collingwood and Nelson, and many another valiant Captain; lounging away years of temptation on the West-Indian station, as sailing-master of a ship-of-the-line; pensioned comfortably now for many a year in his native town, he had been always the same gentle, valiant, righteous man; sober in life, strict in duty, and simple in word; a soul as transparent as crystal, and as pure. He was the oracle of Aberalva now; and even Lieutenant

Brown would ask his opinion,—non-commissioned officer though he was,—in a tone which was all the more patronising, because he stood a little in awe of the old man.

But why, when the boys wanted to be begged off, was the schoolmistress to be their advocate? Because Grace Harvey exercised, without intending anything of the kind, an almost mesmeric influence on every one in the little town. Goodness rather than talent had given her wisdom, and goodness rather than courage a power of using that wisdom, which, to those simple, superstitious folk, seemed altogether an inspiration. There was a mystery about her, too, which worked strongly on the hearts of the West-country people. She was supposed to be at times "not right;" and wandering intellect is with them, as with many primitive peoples, an object more of awe than of pity. Her deep melancholy alternated with bursts of wild eloquence, with fantastic fables, with entreaties and warnings against sin, full of such pity and pathos that they melted, at times, the hardest hearts. A whole world of strange tales, half false, half true, had grown up around her as she grew. She was believed to spend whole nights in prayer; to speak with visitors from the other world; even to have the power of seeing into futurity. The intensity of her imagination gave rise to the belief that she had only to will, and she could see whom she would, and all that they were doing, even across the seas; her exquisite sensibility, it was whispered, made her feel every bodily suffering she

witnessed, as acutely as the sufferer's self, and in the very limb in which he suffered. Her deep melancholy was believed to be caused by some dark fate—by some agonising sympathy with evil-doers; and it was sometimes said in Aberalva,—"Don't do that, for poor Grace's sake. She bears the sins of all the parish."

So it befell that Grace Harvey governed, she knew not how or why, all hearts in that wild simple fishing-town. Rough men, fighting on the quay, shook hands at Grace's bidding. Wives who could not lure their husbands from the beer-shop, sent Grace in to fetch them home, sobered by shame: and woe to the stranger who fancied that her entrance into that noisy den gave him a right to say a rough word to the fair girl! The maidens, instead of envying her beauty, made her the confidant of all their loves; for though many a man would gladly have married her, to woo her was more than any dared; and Gentleman Jan himself, the rightful bully of the quay, as being the handsomest and biggest man for many a mile, beside owning a tidy trawler and two good mackerel-boats, had said openly, that if any man had a right to her, he supposed he had; but that he should as soon think of asking her to marry him, as of asking the moon.

But it was in the school, in the duty which lay nearest to her, that Grace's inward loveliness shone most lovely. Whatever dark cloud of melancholy lay upon her own heart, she took care that it should never overshadow one of those young innocents, whom she taught by love and ruled by love, always

tender, always cheerful, even gay and playful; punishing, when she rarely punished, with tears and kisses. To make them as happy as she could in a world where there was nothing but temptation, and disappointment, and misery; to make them "fit for heaven," and then to pray that they might go thither as speedily as possible, this had been her work for now seven years; and that Manichæism which has driven darker and harder natures to destroy young children, that they might go straight to bliss, took in her the form of outpourings of gratitude (when the first natural tears were dried), as often as one of her little lambs was "delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world." But as long as they were in the world, she was their guardian angel; and there was hardly a mother in Aberalva who did not confess her debt to Grace, not merely for her children's scholarship, but for their characters.

Frank Headley the curate, therefore, had touched altogether the wrong chord when he spoke of displacing Grace. And when, that same afternoon, he sauntered down to the pier-head, wearied with his parish work, not only did Tardrew stump away in silence as soon as he appeared, but Captain Willis's face assumed a grave and severe look, which was not often to be seen on it.

"Well, Captain Willis?" said Frank, solitary and sad; longing for a talk with some one, and not quite sure whether he was welcome.

"Well, sir?" and the old man lifted his hat, and

made one of his princely bows. "You look tired, sir; I am afraid you're doing too much."

"I shall have more to do, soon," said the curate, his eye glancing towards the schoolmistress, who, disturbed by the noise above, was walking slowly up the beach, with a child holding to every finger, and every fold of her dress.

Willis saw the direction of his eye, and came at once to the point, in his gentle, straightforward fashion.

"I hear you have thoughts of taking the school from her, sir?"

"Why—indeed—I shall be very sorry; but if she will persist in going to the chapel, I cannot overlook the sin of schism."

"She takes the children to church twice a Sunday, don't she? And teaches them all that you tell her——"

"Why—yes—I have taken the religious instruction almost into my own hands now."

Willis smiled quietly.

"You'll excuse an old sailor, sir; but I think that's more than mortal man can do. There's no hour of the day but what she's teaching them something. She's telling them Bible stories now, I'll warrant, if you could hear her."

Frank made no answer.

"You wouldn't stop her doing that? Oh, sir," and the old man spoke with a quiet earnestness which was not without its effect, "just look at her now, like the Good Shepherd with His lambs about His feet,

and think whether that's not much too pretty a sight to put an end to, in a poor sinful world like this."

"It is my duty," said Frank, hardening himself. "It pains me exceedingly, Willis;—I hope I need not tell you that."

"If I know aught of Mr. Headley's heart by his ways, you needn't indeed, sir."

"But I cannot allow it.—Her mother a class leader among these Dissenters, and one of the most active of them, too.—The school next door to her house. The preacher, of course, has influence there, and must have. How am I to instil Church principles into them, if he is counteracting me the moment my back is turned? I have made up my mind, Willis, to do nothing in a hurry. Lady-day is past, and she must go on till Midsummer; then I shall take the school into my own hands, and teach them myself, for I can pay no mistress or master; and Mr. St. Just——"

Frank checked himself as he was going to speak the truth; namely, that his sleepy old absentee rector, Lord Scoutbush's uncle, would yawn and grumble at the move, and wondering why Frank "had not the sense to leave ill alone," would give him no manner of assistance beyond his pittance of eighty pounds a-year, and five pounds at Christmas to spend on the poor.

"Excuse me, sir, I don't doubt that you'll do your best in teaching, as you always do: but I tell you honestly, you'll get no children to teach."

"No children?"

"Their mothers know the worth of Grace too well, and the children too, sir; and they'll go to her all the same, do what you will; and never a one will enter the church door from that day forth."

"On their own heads be it!" said Frank, a little testily; "but I should not have fancied Miss Harvey the sort of person to set up herself in defiance of me."

"The more reason, sir, if you'll forgive me, for your not putting upon her."

"I do not want to put upon her or any one. I will do everything. I will—I do—work day and night for these people, Mr. Willis. I tell you, as I would my own father. I don't think I have another object on earth—if I have, I hope I shall forget it—than the parish: but Church principles I must carry out."

"Well, sir, certainly no man ever worked here as you do. If all had been like you, sir, there would not be a Dissenter here now; but excuse me, sir, the Church is a very good thing, and I keep to mine, having served under her Majesty, and her Majesty's forefathers, and learnt to obey orders, I hope; but don't you think, sir, you're taking it as the Pharisees took the Sabbath-day?"

"How then!"

"Why, as if man was made for the Church, and not the Church for man."

"That is a shrewd thought, at least. Where did you pick it up?"

"'Tis none of my own, sir; a bit of wisdom that

my maid let fall; and it has stuck to me strangely ever since."

"Your maid?"

"Yes, Grace there. I always call her my maid; having no father, poor thing, she looks up to me as one, pretty much,—the dear soul. Oh, sir! I hope you'll think over this again, before you do anything. It's done in a day: but years won't undo it again."

So Grace's sayings were quoted against him. Her power was formidable enough, if she dare use it. He was silent awhile, and then—

"Do you think she has heard of this—of my——"

"Honesty's the best policy, sir: she has; and that's the truth. You know how things get round."

"Well; and what did she say?"

"I'll tell you her very words, sir; and they were these, if you'll excuse me. 'Poor dear gentleman,' says she, 'if he thinks chapel-going so wrong, why does he dare drive folks to chapel? I wonder, every time he looks at that deep sea, he don't remember what the Lord said about it, and those who cause his little ones to offend.'"

Frank was somewhat awed. The thought was new; the application of the text, as his own scholarship taught him, even more exact than Grace had fancied.

"Then she was not angry?"

"She, sir! You couldn't anger her if you tore her in pieces with hot pincers, as they did those old martyrs she's always telling about."

"Good-bye, Willis," said Frank, in a hopeless tone of voice, and sauntered to the pier-end, down the steps, and along the lower pier-way, burdened with many thoughts. He came up to the knot of chatting sailors. Not one of them touched his cap, or moved out of the way for him. The boat lay almost across the whole pier-way; and he stopped, awkwardly enough, for there was not room to get by.

"Will you be so kind as to let me pass?" asked he, meekly enough. But no one stirred.

"Why don't you get up, Tom?" asked one.

"I be lame."

"So be I."

"The gentleman can step over me, if he likes," said big Jan; a proposition the impossibility whereof raised a horse-laugh.

"Ain't you ashamed of yourselves, lads?" said the severe voice of Willis, from above. The men rose sulkily; and Frank hastened on, as ready to cry as ever he had been in his life. Poor fellow! he had been labouring among these people for now twelve months, as no man had ever laboured before, and he felt that he had not won the confidence of a single human being,—not even of the old women, who took his teaching for the sake of his charity, and who scented popery, all the while, in words in which there was no popery, and in doctrines which were just the same, on the whole, as those of the dissenting preacher, simply because he would sprinkle among them certain words and phrases which had become "suspect," as party

badges. His church was all but empty; the general excuse was, that it was a mile from the town: but Frank knew that that was not the true reason; that all the parish had got it into their heads that he had a leaning to popery; that he was going over to Rome; that he was probably a Jesuit in disguise.

Now, be it always remembered, Frank Headley was a good man, in every sense of the word. He had nothing, save the outside, in common with those undesirable coxcombs, who have not been bred by the High Church movement, but have taken refuge in its cracks, as they would have done forty years ago in those of the Evangelical,—youths who hide their crass ignorance and dulness under the cloak of Church infallibility, and having neither wit, manners, learning, humanity, or any other dignity whereon to stand, talk loud, *pour pis aller*, about the dignity of the priesthood. Such men Frank had met at neighbouring clerical meetings, overbearing and out-talking the elder and the wiser members; and finding that he got no good from them, had withdrawn into his parish-work, to eat his own heart, like Bellerophon of old. For Frank was a gentleman and a Christian, if ever one there was. Delicate in person, all but consumptive; graceful and refined in all his works and ways; a scholar, elegant rather than deep, yet a scholar still; full of all love for painting, architecture, and poetry, he had come down to bury himself in this remote curacy, in the honest desire of doing good. He had been a curate in a fashionable London Church; but finding

the atmosphere thereof not over wholesome to his soul, he had had the courage to throw off St. Nepomuc's, its brotherhoods, sisterhoods, and all its gorgeous and highly-organised appliances for enabling five thousand rich to take tolerable care of five hundred poor: and had fled from "the holy virgins" (as certain old ladies, who do twice their work with half their noise, call them) into the wilderness of Bethnal Green. But six months' gallant work there, with gallant men (for there are High Churchmen there who are an honour to England), brought him to death's door. The doctors commanded some soft western air. Frank, as chivalrous as a knight-errant of old, would fain have died at his post, but his mother interfered; and he could do no less than obey her. So he had taken this remote west country curacy; all the more willingly because he knew that nine-tenths of the people were Dissenters. To recover that place to the Church would be something worth living for. So he had come, and laboured late and early; and behold, he had failed utterly; and seemed farther than ever from success. He had opened, too hastily, a crusade against the Dissenters, and denounced where he should have conciliated. He had overlooked — indeed he hardly knew—the sad truth, that the mere fact of his being a clergyman was no passport to the hearts of his people. For the curate who preceded him had been an old man, mean, ignorant, incapable, remaining there simply because nobody else would have him, and given to brandy-and-water as much as his flock.

The rector for the last fifteen years, Lord Scoutbush's uncle, was a cypher. The rector before him had notoriously earned the living by a marriage with a lady who stood in some questionable relation to Lord Scoutbush's father, and who had never had a thought above his dinner and his tithes; and all that the Aberalva fishermen knew of God or righteousness, they had learnt from the *soi-disant* disciples of John Wesley. So Frank Headley had to make up, at starting, the arrears of half-a-century of base neglect; but instead of doing so, he had contrived to awaken against himself that dogged hatred of popery which lies inarticulate and confused, but deep and firm, in the heart of the English people. Poor fellow! if he made a mistake, he suffered for it. There was hardly a sadder soul than poor Frank, as he went listlessly up the village street that afternoon, to his lodging at Captain Willis's, which he had taken because he preferred living in the village itself to occupying the comfortable rectory a mile out of town.

However we cannot set him straight;—after all, every man must perform that office for himself. So the best thing we can do, as we landed, naturally, at the pier-head, is to walk up-street after him, and see what sort of a place Aberalva is.

Beneath us, to the left hand, is the quay-pool, now lying dry, in which a dozen trawlers are lopping over on their sides, their red sails drying in the sun, the tails of the trawls hauled up to the topmast heads; while the more handy of their owners are getting on

board by ladders, to pack away the said red sails; for it will blow to night. In the long furrows which their keels have left, and in the shallow muddy pools, lie innumerable fragments of exenterated maids (not human ones, pitiful reader, but belonging to the order Pisces, and the family Raia), and some twenty non-exenterated ray-dogs and picked dogs (Anglice, dog-fish), together with a fine basking shark, at least nine feet long, out of which the kneeling Mr. George Thomas, clothed in pilot cloth patches of every hue, bright scarlet, blue and brown (not to mention a large square of white canvas which has been let into that part of his trousers which is now uppermost), is dissecting the liver for the purpose of greasing his "sheaves" with the fragrant oil thereof. The pools in general are bedded with black mud, and creamed over with oily flakes which may proceed from the tar on the vessels' sides, and may also from "decomposing animal matter," as we euphemise it now-a-days. The hot pebbles, at high-tide mark,—crowned with a long black row of herring and mackerel boats, laid up in ordinary for the present—are beautifully variegated with mackerels' heads, gurnets' fins, old hag, lobworm, and mussel-baits, and the inwards of a whole ichthyological museum; save at one spot where the Cloaca maxima and Port Esquiline of Aberalva town (small enough, considering the place holds fifteen hundred souls) murmurs from beneath a grey stone arch toward the sea, not unfraught with dead rats and cats, who, their ancient feud forgotten, combine lovingly at last

in increasing the health of the blue-trousered urchins who are sailing upon that Acherontic stream bits of board with a feather stuck in it, or of their tiny sisters who are dancing about in the dirtiest pool among the trawlers in a way which (if your respectable black coat be seen upon the pier) will elicit from one of the balconied windows above, decked with reeking shirts and linen, some such shriek as—

"Patience Penberthy, Patience Penberthy—a! You nasty, dirty, little ondecent hussy—a! What be playing in the quay-pool for—a! A pulling up your pesticoats before the quality—a!" Each exclamation being followed with that groaning grunt, with which the West-country folk, after having screamed their lungs empty through their noses, recover their breath for a fresh burst.

Never mind; it is no nosegay, certainly as a whole: but did you ever see sturdier, rosier, nobler-looking children,—rounder faces, raven hair, bright grey eyes, full of fun and tenderness? As for the dirt, that cannot harm them; poor people's children must be dirty—why not? Look on fifty yards to the left. Between two ridges of high pebble bank, some twenty yards apart, comes Alva river rushing to the sea. On the opposite ridge, a low white house, with three or four white canvas-covered boats, and a flag-staff with sloping cross-yard, betokens the coastguard station. Beyond it rise black jagged cliffs; mile after mile of iron-bound wall; and here and there, at the glens' mouths, great banks and denes of shifting sand. In

front of it, upon the beach, are half-a-dozen great green and grey heaps of Welsh limestone; behind it, at the cliff foot, is the lime-kiln, with its white dusty heaps, and brown dusty men, its quivering mirage of hot air, its strings of patient hay-nibbling donkeys, which look as if they had just awakened out of a flour bin. Above, a green down stretches up to bright yellow furze-crofts far aloft. Behind a reedy marsh, covered with red cattle, paves the valley till it closes in; the steep sides of the hills are clothed in oak and ash covert, in which, three months ago, you could have shot more cocks in one day than you would in Berkshire in a year. Pleasant little glimpses there are, too, of grey stone farm-houses, nestling among sycamore and beech; bright-green meadows, alder-fringed; squares of rich red fallow-field, parted by lines of golden furze; all cut out with a peculiar blackness, and clearness, soft and tender withal, which betokens a climate surcharged with rain. Only in the very bosom of the valley, a soft mist hangs, increasing the sense of distance, and softening back one hill and wood behind another, till the great brown moor which backs it all seems to rise out of the empty air. For a thousand feet it ranges up, in rude sheets of brown heather, and grey cairns and screes of granite, all sharp and black-edged against the pale blue sky; and all suddenly cut off above by one long horizontal line of dark grey cloud, which seems to hang there motionless, and yet is growing to windward, and dying to leeward, for ever rushing out of the

invisible into sight, and into the invisible again, at railroad speed. Out of nothing the moor rises, and into nothing it ascends,—a great dark phantom between earth and sky, boding rain and howling tempest, and perhaps fearful wreck—for the ground-swell moans and thunders on the beach behind us, louder and louder every moment.

Let us go on, and up the street, after we have scrambled through the usual labyrinth of timber-baulks, rusty anchors, boats which have been dragged, for the purpose of mending and tarring, into the very middle of the road, and old spars stowed under walls, in the vain hope that they may be of some use for something some day, and have stood the stares and welcomes of the lazy giants who are sitting about upon them, black-locked, black-bearded, with ruddy, wholesome faces, and eyes as bright as diamonds; men who are on their own ground, and know it; who will not touch their caps to you, or pull the short black pipe from between their lips as you pass, but expect you to prove yourself a gentleman, by speaking respectfully to them; which, if you do, you will find them as hearty, intelligent, brave fellows as ever walked this earth, capable of anything, from working the naval-brigade guns at Sevastopol, down to running up to . . . a hundred miles in a cockleshell lugger, to forestall the early mackerel market. God be with you, my brave lads, and with your children after you; for as long as you are what I have known you, Old England will rule the seas, and many a land beside!

But in going up Aberalva Street, you remark several things; first, that the houses were all white-washed yesterday, except where the snowy white is picked out by buttresses of pink and blue; next, that they all have bright green palings in front, and bright green window-sills and frames; next, that they are all roofed with shining grey slate, and the space between the window and the pales flagged with the same; next, that where such space is not flagged, it is full of flowers and shrubs which stand the winter only in our greenhouses. The fuchsias are ten feet high, laden with ripe purple berries running over (for there are no birds to pick them off); and there in the front of the coastguard lieutenant's house, is Cobæa scandens, covered with purple claret-glasses, as it has been ever since Christmas: for Aberalva knows no winter: and there are grown-up men in it who never put on a skate, or made a snowball in their lives. A most cleanly, bright-coloured, foreign-looking street, is that long straggling one which runs up the hill towards Penalva Court: only remark, that this cleanliness is gained by making the gutter in the middle street the common sewer of the town, and tread clear of cabbage-leaves, pilchard bones, *et id genus omne.* For Aberalva is like Paris (if the answer of a celebrated sanitary reformer to the Emperor be truly reported), "fair without but foul within."

However, the wind is blowing dull and hollow from south-west; the clouds are rolling faster and faster up from the Atlantic; the sky to westward is brassy

green; the glass is falling fast; and there will be wind and rain enough to-night to sweep even Aberalva clean for the next week.

Grace Harvey sees the coming storm, as she goes slowly homewards, dismissing her little flock; and she lingers long and sadly outside her cottage door, looking out over the fast blackening sea, and listening to the hollow thunder of the groundswell, against the back of the point which shelters Aberalva Cove.

Far away on the horizon, the masts of stately ships stand out against the sky, driving fast to the eastward with shortened sail. They, too, know what is coming; and Grace prays for them as she stands, in her wild way, with half outspoken words.

"All those gallant ships, dear Lord! and so many beautiful men in them, and so few of them ready to die; and all those gallant soldiers going to the war;—Lord, wilt thou not have mercy? Spare them for a little time before——. Is not that cruel, man-devouring sea full enough, Lord; and brave men's bones enough, strewn up and down all rocks and sands? And is not that dark place full enough, O Lord, of poor souls cut off in a moment, as my two were? Oh, not to-night, dear Lord! Do not call any one to-night—give them a day more, one chance more, poor fellows—they have had so few, and so many temptations, and, perhaps, no schooling. They go to sea so early, and young things will be young things, Lord. Spare them but one night more—and yet He did not spare

my two—they had no time to repent, and have no time for ever, evermore!"

And she stands looking out over the sea; but she has lost sight of everything, save her own sad imaginations. Her eyes open wider and wider, as if before some unseen horror; the eyebrows contract upwards; the cheeks sharpen; the mouth parts; the lips draw back, showing the white teeth, as if in intensest agony. Thus she stands long, motionless, awe-frozen, save when a shudder runs through every limb, with such a countenance as that "fair terror" of which Shelley sang—

> "Its horror and its beauty are divine;
> Upon its lips and eyelids seem to lie
> Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
> Fiery and lucid, struggling underneath,
> The agonies of anguish and of death."

Her mother comes out from the cottage door behind, and lays her hand upon the girl's shoulder. The spell is broken; and hiding her face in her hands, Grace bursts into violent weeping.

"What are you doing, my poor child, here in the cold night air?"

"My two, mother, my two!" said she; "and all the poor souls at sea to-night!"

"You mustn't think of it. Haven't I told you not to think of it? One would lose one's wits if one did too often."

"If it is all true, mother, what else is there worth thinking of in heaven or earth?"

And Grace goes in with a dull, heavy look of utter exhaustion, bodily and mental, and quietly sets the things for supper, and goes about her cottage work as one who bears a heavy chain, but has borne it too long to let it hinder the daily drudgery of life.

Grace had reason to pray at least, for the soldiers who were going to the war. For as she prayed, the Orinoco, Ripon, and Manilla, were steaming down Southampton Water, with the Guards on board; and but that morning little Lord Scoutbush, left behind at the dêpot, had bid farewell to his best friend, opposite Buckingham Palace, while the bearskins were on the bayonet-points, with—

"Well, old fellow, you have the fun, after all, and I the work;" and had been answered with—

"Fun? there will be no fighting; and I shall only have lost my season in town."

Was there, then, no man among them that day, who

"As the trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
Heard in the wild March morning the angels call his soul"?

. . . . . .

Verily they are gone down to Hades, even many stalwart souls of heroes.

CHAPTER III.

ANYTHING BUT STILL LIFE.

PENALVA Court, about half a mile from the quay, is "like a house in a story;"—a house of seven gables, and those very shaky ones; a house of useless long passages, useless turrets, vast lumber attics where maids see ghosts, lofty garden and yard walls of grey stone, round which the wind and rain are lashing through the dreary darkness; low oak-ribbed ceilings; windows which once were mullioned with stone, but now with wood painted white; walls which were once oak-wainscot, but have been painted like the mullions, to the disgust of Elsley Vavasour, poet, its occupant in March 1854, who forgot that, while the oak was left dark, no man could have seen to read in the rooms a yard from the window.

He has, however, little reason to complain of the one drawing-room, where he and his wife are sitting, so pleasant has she made it look, in spite of the plainness of the furniture. A bright log-fire is burning on the hearth. There are a few good books too, and a few handsome prints; while some really valuable nick-nacks are set out, with pardonable ostentation,

on a little table covered with crimson velvet. It is only cotton velvet, if you look close at it; but the things are pretty enough to catch the eye of all visitors; and Mrs. Heale, the Doctor's wife (who always calls Mrs. Vavasour "my lady," though she does not love her), and Mrs. Trebooze, of Trebooze, always finger them over when they have any opportunity, and whisper to each other half contemptuously, —"Ah, poor thing! there's a sign that she has seen better days."

And better days, in one sense, Mrs. Vavasour has seen. I am afraid, indeed, that she has more than once regretted the morning when she ran away in a hack-cab from her brother Lord Scoutbush's house in Eaton Square, to be married to Elsley Vavasour, the gifted author of "A Soul's Agonies and other Poems." He was a lion then, with foolish women running after him, and turning his head once and for all; and Lucia St. Just was a wild Irish girl, new to London society, all feeling and romance, and literally all; for there was little real intellect underlying her passionate sensibility. So when the sensibility burnt itself out, as it generally does; and when children, and the weak health which comes with them, and the cares of a household, and money difficulties were absorbing her little powers, Elsley Vavasour began to fancy that his wife was a very commonplace person, who was fast losing even her good looks and her good temper. So, on the whole, they were not happy. Elsley was an affectionate man, and honourable to a fantastic nicety;

but he was vain, capricious, over-sensitive, craving for admiration and distinction; and it was not enough for him that his wife loved him, and bore him children, kept his accounts, mended and moiled all day long for him and his; he wanted her to act the public for him exactly when he was hungry for praise; and that not the actual, but an altogether ideal, public; to worship him as a deity, "live for him and him alone," "realise" his poetic dreams of marriage bliss, and talk sentiment with him, or listen to him talking sentiment to her, when she would much sooner be safe in bed burying all the petty cares of the day, and the pain in her back too, poor thing! in sound sleep; and so it befell that they often quarrelled and wrangled, and that they were quarrelling and wrangling this very night.

Who cares to know how it began? Who cares to hear how it went on,—the stupid, aimless skirmish of bitter words, between two people who had forgotten themselves? I believe it began with Elsley's being vexed at her springing up two or three times, fancying that she heard the children cry, while he wanted to be quiet, and sentimentalise over the roaring of the wind outside. Then—she thought of nothing but those children. Why did she not take a book and occupy her mind? To which she had her pert, though just answer, about her mind having quite enough to do to keep clothes on the children's backs, and so forth,—let who list imagine the miserable little squabble;—till she says,—"I know what has

put you out so to-night; nothing but the news of my sister's coming. He answers,—"That her sister is as little to him as to any man; as welcome to come now as she has been to stay away these three years."

"Ah, it's very well to say that; but you have been a different person ever since that letter came." And so she torments him into an angry self-justification (which she takes triumphantly as a confession) that "it is very disagreeable to have his thoughts broken in on by one who has no sympathy with him and his pursuits—and who——" and at that point he wisely stops short, for he was going to throw down a very ugly gage of battle.

Thrown down or not, Lucia snatches at it.

"Ah, I understand; poor Valentia! You always hated her."

"I did not: but she is so brusque, and excited, and——"

"Be so kind as not to abuse my family. You may say what you will of me; but——"

"And what have your family done for me, pray?"

"Why, considering that we are now living rent-free in my brother's house, and——" She stops in her turn; for her pride and her prudence also will not let her tell him that Valentia has been clothing her and the children for the last three years. He is just the man to forbid her on the spot to receive any more presents, and to sacrifice her comfort to his own pride. But what she has said is quite enough to bring

out a very angry answer, which she expecting, nips in the bud by——

"For goodness' sake, don't speak so loud; I don't want the servants to hear."

"I am not speaking loud"—(he has not yet opened his lips). "That is your old trick to prevent my defending myself, while you are driving one mad. How dare you taunt me with being a pensioner on your brother's bounty? I'll go up to town again and take lodgings there. I need not be beholden to any aristocrat of them all. I have my own station in the real world,—the world of intellect; I have my own friends; I have made myself a name without his help; and I can live without his help, he shall find!"

"Which name were you speaking of?" rejoins she looking up at him, with all her native Irish humour flashing up for a moment in her naughty eyes. The next minute she would have given her hand not to have said it; for, with a very terrible word, Elsley springs to his feet and dashes out of the room.

She hears him catch up his hat and cloak, and hurry out into the rain, slamming the door behind him. She springs up to call him back, but he is gone;—and she dashes herself on the floor, and bursts into an agony of weeping over "young bliss never to return"? Not in the least. Her principal fear is, lest he should catch cold in the rain. She takes up her work again, and stitches away in the comfortable certainty that in half an hour she will have recovered her temper, and he also; that they will pass a sulky

night; and to-morrow, by about mid-day, without explanation or formal reconciliation, have become as good friends as ever. "Perhaps," says she to herself, with a woman's sense of power, "if he be very much ashamed and very wet, I'll pity him and make friends to-night."

Miserable enough are these little squabbles. Why will two people, who have sworn to love and cherish each other utterly, and who, on the whole, do what they have sworn, behave to each other as they dare for very shame behave to no one else? Is it that, as every beautiful thing has its hideous antitype, this mutual shamelessness is the devil's ape of mutual confidence? Perhaps it cannot be otherwise with beings compact of good and evil. When the veil of reserve is withdrawn from between two souls, it must be withdrawn for evil, as for good, till the two natures, which ought to seek rest, each in the other's inmost depths, may at last spring apart, confronting each other recklessly with,—"There, you see me as I am; you know the worst of me, and I of you; take me as you find me—what care I?"

Elsley and Lucia have not yet arrived at that terrible crisis; though they are on the path toward it,—the path of little carelessnesses, rudenesses, ungoverned words and tempers, and, worst of all, of that half-confidence, which is certain to avenge itself by irritation and quarrelling; for if two married people will not tell each other in love what they ought, they will be sure to tell each other in anger

what they ought not. It is plain enough already that Elsley has his weak point, which must not be touched; something about "a name," which Lucia is to be expected to ignore,—as if anything which really exists could be ignored while two people live together night and day, for better for worse. Till the thorn is out, the wound will not heal; and till the matter (whatever it may be) is set right, by confession and absolution, there will be no peace for them, for they are living in a lie; and, unless it be a very little one indeed, better, perhaps, that they should go on to that terrible crisis of open defiance. It may end in disgust, hatred, madness; but it may, too, end in each falling again upon the other's bosom, and sobbing out through holy tears,—"Yes, you do know the worst of me, and yet you love me still. This is happiness, to find oneself most loved when one most hates oneself! God, help us to confess our sins to Thee, as we have done to each other, and to begin life again like little children, struggling hand in hand out of this lowest pit, up the steep path which leads to life, and strength, and peace."

Heaven grant that it may so end! But now Elsley has gone raging out into the raging darkness; trying to prove himself to himself the most injured of men, and to hate his wife as much as possible: though the fool knows the whole time that he loves her better than anything on earth, even than that "fame," on which he tries to fatten his lean soul, snapping greedily at every scrap which falls in his

way, and, in default, snapping at everybody and everything else. And little comfort it gives him. Why should it? What comfort, save in being wise and strong? And is he the wiser or stronger for being told by a reviewer that he has written fine words, or has failed in writing them; or to have silly women writing to ask for his autograph, or for leave to set his songs to music? Nay,—shocking as the question may seem,—is he the wiser and stronger man for being a poet at all, and a genius?—provided, of course, that the word genius is used in its modern meaning, of a person who can say prettier things than his neighbours. I think not. Be it as it may, away goes the poor genius; his long cloak, picturesque enough in calm weather, fluttering about uncomfortably enough, while the rain washes his long curls into swabs; out through the old garden, between storm-swept laurels, beneath dark groaning pines, and through a door in the wall which opens into the lane.

The lane leads downward, on the right, into the village. He is in no temper to meet his fellow-creatures,—even to see the comfortable gleam through their windows, as the sailors close round the fire with wife and child; so he turns to the left, up the deep stone-banked lane, which leads towards the cliff, dark now as pitch, for it is overhung, right and left, with deep oak-wood.

It is no easy matter to proceed, though, for the wind pours down the lane as through a funnel, and the road is of slippery bare slate, worn here and there

into puddles of greasy clay, and Elsley slips back half of every step, while his wrath, as he tires, oozes out of his heels. Moreover, those dark trees above him, tossing their heads impatiently against the scarcely less dark sky, strike an awe into him,—a sense of loneliness, almost of fear. An uncanny, bad night it is; and he is out on a bad errand; and he knows it, and wishes that he were home again. He does not believe, of course, in those "spirits of the storm," about whom he has so often written, any more than he does in a great deal of his fine imagery; but still in such characters as his, the sympathy between the moods of nature and those of the mind is most real and important; and Dame Nature's equinoctial night wrath is weird, gruesome, crushing, and can be faced (if it must be faced) in real comfort only when one is going on an errand of mercy, with a clear conscience, a light heart, a good cigar, and plenty of Mackintosh.

So, ere Elsley had gone a quarter of a mile, he turned back, and resolved to go in, and take up his book once more. Perhaps Lucia might beg his pardon; and if not, why, perhaps he might beg hers. The rain was washing the spirit out of him, as it does out of a thin-coated horse.

Stay! What was that sound above the roar of the gale? a cannon?

He listened, turning his head right and left to escape the howling of the wind in his ears. A minute, and another boom rose and rang aloft. It was near,

too. He almost fancied that he felt the concussion of the air.

Another, and another; and then, in the village below, he could see lights hurrying to and fro. A wreck at sea? He turned again up the lane. He had never seen a wreck. What an opportunity for a poet; and on such a night too: it would be magnificent if the moon would but come out! Just the scene, too, for his excited temper! He will work on upward, let it blow and rain as it may. He is not disappointed. Ere he has gone a hundred yards, a mass of dripping oil-skins runs full butt against him, knocking him against the bank; and, by the clank of weapons, he recognises the coast-guard watchman.

"Hillo!—who's that? Beg your pardon, sir," as the man recognises Elsley's voice.

"What is it?—what are the guns?"

"God knows, sir! Overright the Chough and Crow; on 'em, I'm afeard. There they go again!—hard up, poor souls! God help them!" and the man runs shouting down the lane.

Another gun, and another; but long ere Elsley reaches the cliff, they are silent; and nothing is to be heard but the noise of the storm, which, loud as it was below among the wood, is almost intolerable now that he is on the open down.

He struggles up the lane toward the cliff, and there pauses, gasping, under the shelter of a wall, trying to analyse that enormous mass of sound which fills his ears and brain, and flows through his heart like mad-

dening wine. He can bear the sight of the dead grass on the cliff-edge, weary, feeble, expostulating with its old tormentor the gale; then the fierce screams of the blasts as they rush up across the layers of rock below, like hounds leaping up at their prey; and far beneath, the horrible confused battle-roar of that great leaguer of waves. He cannot see them, as he strains his eyes over the wall into the blank depth,—nothing but a confused welter and quiver of mingled air, and rain, and spray, as if the very atmosphere were writhing in the clutches of the gale: but he can hear,—what can he not hear? It would have needed a less vivid brain than Elsley's to fancy another Badajos beneath. There it all is:—the rush of columns to the breach, officers cheering them on,—pauses, breaks, wild retreats, upbraiding calls, whispering consultations,—fresh rush on rush, now here, now there,—fierce shouts above, below, behind,—shrieks of agony, choked groans and gasps of dying men,—scaling-ladders hurled down with all their rattling freight,—dull mine-explosions, ringing cannon-thunder, as the old fortress blasts back its besiegers pell-mell into the deep. It is all there: truly enough there, at least, to madden yet more Elsley's wild angry brain, till he tries to add his shouts to the great battle-cries of land and sea, and finds them as little audible as an infant's wail.

Suddenly, far below him, a bright glimmer;—and, in a moment, a blue-light reveals the whole scene, in ghastly hues,—blue leaping breakers, blue weltering

sheets of foam, blue rocks, crowded with blue figures, like ghosts, flitting to and fro upon the brink of that blue seething Phlegethon, and rushing up towards him through the air, a thousand flying blue foam-sponges, which dive over the brow of the hill and vanish, like delicate fairies fleeing before the wrath of the gale:—but where is the wreck? The blue-light cannot pierce the grey veil of mingled mist and spray which hangs to seaward; and her guns have been silent for half an hour and more.

Elsley hurries down, and finds half the village collected on the long sloping point of down below. Sailors wrapped in pilot-cloth, oil-skinned coast-guardsmen, women with their gowns turned over their heads, staggering restlessly up and down, and in and out, while every moment some fresh comer stumbles down the slope, thrusting himself into his clothes as he goes, and asks, "Where's the wreck!" and gets no answer, but a surly advice to "hold his noise," as if they had hope of hearing the wreck which they cannot see; and kind women, with their hearts full of mothers' instincts, declare that they can hear little children crying, and are pooh-poohed down by kind men, who, man's fashion, don't like to believe anything too painful, or, if they believe it, to talk of it.

"What were the guns from, then, Brown?" asks the Lieutenant of the head-boatman.

"Off the Chough and Crow, I thought, sir. God grant not!"

"You thought, sir!" says the great man, willing to vent his vexation on some one. "Why didn't you make sure?"

"Why, just look, Lieutenant," says Brown, pointing into the "blank height of the dark;" "and I was on the pier too, and couldn't see; but the look-out man here says——" A shift of wind, a drift of cloud, and the moon flashes out a moment.—"There she is, sir!"

Some three hundred yards out at sea lies a long curved black line, beautiful, severe, and still, amid those white wild leaping hills. A murmur from the crowd, which swells into a roar, as they surge aimlessly up and down.

Another moment, and it is cut in two by a white line—covered—lost—all hold their breaths. No; the sea passes on, and still the black curve is there; enduring.

"A terrible big ship!"

"A Liverpool clipper, by the lines of her."

"God help the poor passengers, then!" sobs a woman. "They're past our help: she's on her beam ends."

"And her deck upright toward us."

"Silence! Out of the way you loafing longshores!" shouts the Lieutenant. "Brown—the rockets!"

What though the Lieutenant be somewhat given to strong liquors, and stronger language? He wears the Queen's uniform; and what is more, he knows his

work, and can do it; all make a silent ring while the fork is planted; the Lieutenant, throwing away the end of his cigar, kneels and adjusts the stick; Brown and his mates examine and shake out the coils of line.

Another minute, and the magnificent creature rushes forth with a triumphant roar, and soars aloft over the waves in a long stream of fire, defiant of the gale.

Is it over her? No! A fierce gust, which all but hurls the spectators to the ground; the fiery stream sweeps away to the left, in a grand curve of sparks, and drops into the sea.

"Try it again!" shouts the Lieutenant, his blood now up. "We'll see which will beat, wind or powder."

Again a rocket is fixed, with more allowance for the wind; but the black curve has disappeared, and he must wait awhile.

"There it is again! Fly swift and sure," cries Elsley, "thou fiery angel of mercy, bearing the saviour-line! It may not be too late yet."

Full and true the rocket went across her; and "three cheers for the Lieutenant!" rose above the storm.

"Silence, lads! Not so bad, though;" says he, rubbing his wet hands. "Hold on by the line, and watch for a bite, Brown."

Five minutes pass. Brown has the line in his hand, waiting for any signal touch from the ship: but the line sways limp in the surge.

Ten minutes. The Lieutenant lights a fresh cigar, and paces up and down, smoking fiercely.

A quarter of an hour; and yet no response. The moon is shining clearly now. They can see her hatchways, the stumps of her masts, great tangles of rigging swaying and lashing down across her deck; but that delicate upper curve is becoming more ragged after every wave; and the tide is rising fast.

"There's a pull!" shouts Brown. . . . "No, there ain't . . . God have mercy, sir! She's going!"

The black curve boils up, as if a mine had been sprung on board, leaps into arches, jagged peaks, black bars crossed and tangled; and then all melts away into the white seething waste; while the line floats home helplessly, as if disappointed; and the billows plunge more sullenly and sadly towards the shore, as if in remorse for their dark and reckless deed.

All is over. What shall we do now? Go home, and pray that God may have mercy on all drowning souls? Or think what a picturesque and tragical scene it was, and what a beautiful poem it will make, when we have thrown it into an artistic form, and bedizened it with conceits and analogies stolen from all heaven and earth by our own self-willed fancy?

Elsley Vavasour—through whose spectacles, rather than with my own eyes, I have been looking at the wreck, and to whose account, not to mine, the metaphors and similes of the last two pages must be laid—took the latter course; not that he was not awed, calmed, and even humbled, as he felt how poor and

petty his own troubles were, compared with that great tragedy: but in his fatal habit of considering all matters in heaven and earth as bricks and mortar for the poet to build with, he considered that he had "seen enough;" as if men were sent into the world to see and not to act; and going home too excited to sleep, much more to go and kiss forgiveness to his sleeping wife, sat up all night, writing "The Wreck," which may be (as the reviewer in "The Parthenon" asserts) an exquisite poem; but I cannot say that it is of much importance.

So the delicate genius sate that night, scribbling verses by a warm fire, and the rough Lieutenant settled himself down in his Mackintoshes, to sit out those weary hours on the bare rock, having done all that he could do, and yet knowing that his duty was, not to leave the place as long as there was a chance of saving—not a life, for that was past all hope—but a chest of clothes, or a stick of timber. There he settled himself, grumbling, yet faithful; and filled up the time with sleepy maledictions against some old admiral, who had—or had not—taken a spite to him in the West Indies thirty years before, else he would have been a post captain by now, comfortably in bed on board a crack frigate, instead of sitting all night out on a rock, like an old cormorant, etc. etc. Who knows not the woes of ancient coast-guard lieutenants?

But as it befell, Elsley Vavasour was justly punished for going home, by losing the most "poetical" incident of the whole night.

For with the coast-guardsmen many sailors stayed. There was nothing to be earned by staying: but still, who knew but they might be wanted? And they hung on with the same feeling which tempts one to linger round a grave ere the earth is filled in, loth to give up the last sight, and with it the last hope. The ship herself, over and above her lost crew, was in their eyes a person to be loved and regretted. And Gentleman Jan spoke, like a true sailor—

"Ah, poor dear! And she such a beauty, Mr. Brown; as any one might see by her lines, even that way off. Ah, poor dear!"

"And so many brave souls on board; and, perhaps, some of them not ready, Mr. Beer," says the serious elderly chief boatman. "Eh, Captain Willis?"

"The Lord has had mercy on them, I don't doubt." answers the old man, in his quiet sweet voice. "One can't but hope that he would give them time for one prayer before all was over; and having been drowned myself, Mr. Brown, three times, and taken up for dead —that is, once in Gibraltar Bay, and once when I was a total wreck in the old Seahorse, that was in the hurricane in the Indies; after that when I fell over quay-head here, fishing for bass,—why, I know well how quick the prayer will run through a man's heart, when he's a-drowning, and the light of conscience, too, all one's life in one minute, like——"

"It arn't the men I care for," says Gentleman Jan; "they're gone to heaven, like all brave sailors do as dies by wreck and battle: but the poor dear

ship, d'ye see, Captain Willis, she ha'n't no heaven to go to, and that's why I feel for her so."

Both the old men shake their heads at Jan's doctrine, and turn the subject off.

"You'd better go home, Captain, 'fear of the rheumatics. It's a rough night for your years; and you've no call, like me."

"I would, but my maid there; and I can't get her home; and I can't leave her." And Willis points to the schoolmistress, who sits upon the flat slope of rock, a little apart from the rest, with her face resting on her hands, gazing intently out into the wild waste.

"Make her go; it's her duty—we all have our duties. Why does her mother let her out at this time of night? I keep my maids tighter than that, I warrant." And disciplinarian Mr. Brown makes a step towards her.

"Ah, Mr. Brown, don't now! She's not one of us. There's no saying what's going on there in her. Maybe she's praying; maybe she sees more than we do, over the sea there."

"What do you mean? There's no living body in those breakers, be sure!"

"There's more living things about on such a night than have bodies to them, or than any but such as she can see. If any one ever talked with angels, that maid does; and I've heard her, too; I can say I have —certain of it. Those that like may call her an innocent: but I wish I were such an innocent, Mr. Brown. I'd be nearer heaven then, here on earth,

than I fear sometimes I ever shall be, even after I'm dead and gone."

"Well, she's a good girl, mazed or not; but look at her now! What's she after?"

The girl had raised her head, and was pointing, with one arm stretched stiffly out toward the sea.

Old Willis went down to her, and touched her gently on the shoulder.

"Come home, my maid, then, you'll take cold, indeed;" but she did not move or lower her arm.

The old man, accustomed to her fits of fixed melancholy, looked down under her bonnet, to see whether she was "past," as he called it. By the moonlight he could see her great eyes steady and wide open. She motioned him away, half impatiently, and then sprang to her feet with a scream.

"A man! A man! Save him!"

As she spoke, a huge wave rolled in, and shot up the sloping end of the point in a broad sheet of foam.

And out of it struggled, on hands and knees, a human figure. He looked wildly up, and round, and then his head dropped again on his breast; and he lay clinging with outspread arms, like Homer's polypus in the Odyssey, as the wave drained back, in a thousand roaring cataracts, over the edge of the rock.

"Save him!" shrieked she again, as twenty men rushed forward—and stopped short. The man was fully thirty yards from them: but close to him, between them and him, stretched a long ghastly crack,

some ten feet wide, cutting the point across. All knew it: its slippery edge, its polished upright sides, the seething cauldrons within it; and knew, too, that the next wave would boil up from it in a hundred jets, and suck in the strongest to his doom, to fall, with brains dashed out, into a chasm from which was no return.

Ere they could nerve themselves for action, the wave had come. Up the slope it went, one half of it burying the wretched mariner, and fell over into the chasm. The other half rushed up the chasm itself, and spouted forth again to the moonlight in columns of snow, in time to meet the wave from which it had just parted, as it fell from above; and then the two boiled up, and round, and over, and swirled along the smooth rock to their very feet.

The schoolmistress took one long look; and as the wave retired, rushed after it to the very brink of the chasm, and flung herself on her knees.

"She's mazed!"

"No, she's not!" almost screamed old Willis, in mingled pride and terror, as he rushed after her. "The wave has carried him across the crack and she's got him!" And he sprang upon her, and caught her round the waist.

"Now, if you be men!" shouted he, as the rest hurried down.

"Now, if you be men; before the next wave comes!" shouted Big Jan. "Hands together, and make a line!" And he took a grip with one hand of

the old man's waistband, and held out the other for who would to seize.

Who took it? Frank Headley, the curate, who had been watching all sadly apart, longing to do something which no one could mistake.

"Be you man enough?" asked big Jan doubtfully.

"Try," said Frank.

"Really, you ben't, sir," said Jan, civilly enough. "Means no offence, sir; your heart's stout enough, I see; but you don't know what'll be." And he caught the hand of a huge fellow next him, while Frank shrank sadly back into the darkness.

Strong hand after hand was clasped, and strong knee after knee dropped almost to the rock, to meet the coming rush of water; and all who knew their business took a long breath,—they might have need of one.

It came, and surged over the man, and the girl, and up to old Willis's throat, and round the knees of Jan and his neighbour; and then followed the returning out-draught, and every limb quivered with the strain: but when the cataract had disappeared, the chain was still unbroken.

"Saved!" and a cheer broke from all lips, save those of the girl herself; she was as senseless as he whom she had saved. They hurried her and him up the rock ere another wave could come; but they had much ado to open her hands, so firmly clenched together were they round his waist.

Gently they lifted each, and laid them on the rock:

while old Willis, having recovered his breath, set to work crying like a child, to restore breath to "his maiden."

"Run for Dr. Heale, some good Christian!" But Frank, longing to escape from a company who did not love him, and to be of some use ere the night was out, was already half-way to the village on that very errand.

However, ere the Doctor could be stirred out of his boozy slumbers, and thrust into his clothes by his wife, the schoolmistress was safe in bed at her mother's house; and the man, weak, but alive, carried triumphantly up to Heale's door; which having been kicked open, the sailors insisted in carrying him right upstairs, and depositing him on the best spare bed.

"If you won't come to your patients, Doctor, your patients shall come to you. Why were you asleep in your liquors, instead of looking out for poor wratches, like a Christian? You see whether his bones be broke, and gi'un his medicines proper; and then go and see after the schoolmistress; she'm worth a dozen of any man, and a thousand of you! We'll pay for 'un like men; and if you don't, we'll break every bottle in your shop."

To which, what between bodily fear and real good-nature, old Heale assented; and so ended that eventful night.

CHAPTER IV.

FLOTSOM, JETSOM, AND LAGEND.

ABOUT nine o'clock the next morning, Gentleman Jan strolled into Dr. Heale's surgery, pipe in mouth, with an attendant satellite; for every lion, poor as well as rich,—in country as in town, must needs have his jackal.

Heale's surgery—or, in plain English, shop—was a doleful hole enough; in such dirt and confusion as might be expected from a drunken occupant, with a practice which was only not decaying because there was no rival in the field. But monopoly made the old man, as it makes most men, all the more lazy and careless; and there was not a drug on his shelves which could be warranted to work the effect set forth in that sanguine and too trustful book, the Pharmacopœia, which, like Mr. Pecksniff's England, expects every man to do his duty, and is, accordingly (as the Lancet and Dr. Letheby know too well), grievously disappointed.

In this kennel of evil savours, Heale was slowly trying to poke things into something like order; and dragging out a few old drugs with a shaky hand, to

see if any one would buy them, in a vague expectation that something must needs have happened to somebody the night before, which would require somewhat of his art.

And he was not disappointed. Gentleman Jan, without taking his pipe out of his mouth, dropped his huge elbows on the counter, and his black-fringed chin on his fists; took a look round the shop, as if to find something which would suit him; and then—

"I say, Doctor, gi's some tackleum."

"Some diachylum plaster, Mr. Beer?" says Heale, meekly. "What for, then?"

"To tackle my shins. I barked 'em cruel against King Arthur's nose last night. Hard in the bone he is;—wish I was as hard."

"How much diachylum will you want, then, Mr. Beer?"

"Well, I don't know. Let's see!" and Jan pulls up his blue trousers, and pulls down his grey rig and furrows, and considers his broad and shaggy shins.

"Matter of four pennies broad: two to each leg;" and then replaces his elbows, and smokes on.

"I say, Doctor, that 'ere curate come out well last night. I shall go to church next Sunday."

"What," asks the satellite, "after you upset he that fashion yesterday?"

"I don't care what you thinks;" says Jan, who, of course, bullies his jackal, like most lions: "but I goes to church. He's a good 'un, say I,—little and good, like a Welshman's cow; and clapped me on the back

when we'd got the man and the maid safe, and says, —'Well done our side, old fellow!' and stands something hot all round, what's more, in at the Mariner's Rest.—I say, Doctor, where's he as we hauled ashore? I'll go up and see 'un."

"Not now, then, Mr. Beer; not now, then. He's sleeping, indeed he is, like any child."

"So much the better. We wain't be bothered with his hollering. But go up I will. Do ye let me now; I'll be as still as a maid."

And Jan kicked off his shoes, and marched on tiptoe through the shop, while Dr. Heale, moaning professional ejaculations, showed him the way.

The shipwrecked man was sleeping sweetly; and little was to be seen of his face, so covered was it with dark tangled curls and thick beard.

"Ah! a 'Stralian digger, by the beard of him, and his red jersey," whispered Jan, as he bent tenderly over the poor fellow, and put his head on one side to listen to his breathing. "Beautiful he sleeps, to be sure!" said Jan: "and a tidy-looking chap, too. 'Tis a pity to wake 'un, poor wratch; and he, perhaps, with a sweetheart aboard, and drownded; or else all his kit lost.—Let 'un sleep so long as he can: he'll find all out soon enough, God help him!"

And big Jan stole down the stairs gently and reverently, like a true sailor; and took his diachylum, and went off to plaster his shins.

About ten minutes afterwards, Heale was made aware that his guest was awake, by sundry grunts and

ejaculations, which ended in a series of long and doleful whistles, and then broke out into a song. So he went up, and found the stranger sitting upright in bed, combing his curls with his fingers, and chaunting unto himself a cheerful ditty.

"Good morning, Doctor," quoth he, as his host entered. "Very kind of you, this. Hope I haven't turned a better man than myself out of his bed."

"Delighted to see you so well. Very near drowned, though. We were pumping at your lungs for a full half hour."

"Ah? nothing, though, for an experienced professional man like you!"

"Hum! speaks well for your discrimination," says Heale, flattered. "Very well-spoken young person, though his beard is a bit wild.—How did you know, then, that I was a doctor?"

"By the reverend looks of you, sir. Besides, I smelt the rhubarb and senna all the way up-stairs, and knew that I'd fallen among professional brethren:—

"'Oh, then this valiant mariner,
Which sailed across the sea,
He came home to his own sweetheart,
With his heart so full of glee;

With his heart so full of glee, sir,
And his pockets full of gold,
And his bag of drugget, with many a nugget,
As heavy as he could hold.'

Don't you wish yours was, Doctor?"

"Eh, eh, eh," sniggered Heale.

"Mine was last night. Now, Doctor, let's have a

glass of brandy-and-water, hot with, and an hour's more sleep; and then kick me out, and into the workhouse. Was anybody else saved from the wreck last night?"

"Nobody, sir," said Heale; and said "sir," because, in spite of the stranger's rough looks, his accent,—or rather, his no-accent,—showed him that he had fallen in with a very different, and probably a very superior stamp of man to himself; in the light of which conviction (and being withal a good-natured old soul), he went down and mixed him a stiff glass of brandy-and water, answering his wife's remonstrances by—

"The party up-stairs is a bit of a frantic party, certainly; but he is certainly a very superior party, and has the true gentleman about him, any one can see. Besides, he's shipwrecked, as you and I may be any day; and what's like brandy-and-water?"

"I should like to know when I'm like to be shipwrecked, or you either;" says Mrs. Heale, in a tone slightly savouring of indignation and contempt. "You think of nothing but brandy-and-water." But she let the doctor take the glass upstairs, nevertheless.

A few minutes afterwards, Frank came in, and inquired for the shipwrecked man.

"Well enough in body, sir; and rather requires your skill than mine," said the old time-server. "Won't you walk up?"

So up Frank was shown.

The stranger was sitting up in bed. "Capital, your brandy is, Doctor.—Ah, sir," seeing Frank, "it

is very kind of you, I am sure, to call on me! I presume you are the clergyman?"

But before Frank could answer, Heale had broken forth into loud praises of him, setting forth how the stranger owed his life entirely to his superhuman strength and courage.

"'Pon my word, sir," said the stranger,—looking them both over and over, through and through, as if to settle how much of all this he was to believe,—"I am deeply indebted to you for your gallantry. I only wish it had been employed on a better subject."

"My good sir," said Frank, blushing, "you owe your life not to me. I would have helped if I could; but was not thought worthy by our sons of Anak here. Your actual preserver was a young girl."

And Frank told him the story.

"Whew! I hope she won't expect me to marry her as payment.—Handsome?"

"Beautiful," said Frank.

"Money?"

"The village schoolmistress."

"Clever?"

"A sort of half-baked body," said Heale.

"A very puzzling intellect," said Frank.

"Ah—well—that's a fair excuse for declining the honour. I can't be expected to marry a frantic party, as you called me down stairs just now, Doctor."

"I, sir?"

"Yes, I heard; no offence, though, my good sir,—but I've the ears of a fox. I hope really,

though, that she is none the worse for her heroic flights."

"How is she this morning, Mr. Heale?"

"Well—poor thing, a little light-headed last night: but kindly when I went in last."

"Whew! I hope she has not fallen in love with me. She may fancy me her property—a private waif and stray. Better send for the Coast-guard officer, and let him claim me as belonging to the Admiralty, as flotsom, jetsom, and lagend; for I was all three last night."

"You were, indeed, sir," said Frank, who began to be a little tired of this levity; "and very thankful to Heaven you ought to be."

Frank spake this in a somewhat professional tone of voice; at which the stranger arched his eyebrows, screwed his lips up, and laid his ears back, like a horse when he meditates a kick.

"You must be better acquainted with my affairs than I am, my dear sir, if you are able to state that fact.—Doctor! I hear a patient coming into the surgery."

"Extraordinary power of hearing, to be sure," said Heale, toddling down stairs, while the stranger went on, looking Frank full in the face.

"Now that old fogy's gone down stairs, my dear sir, let us come to an understanding at the beginning of our acquaintance. Of course, you're bound by your cloth to say that sort of thing to me, just as I am bound by it not to swear in your company: but

you'll allow me to remark, that it would be rather trying even to your faith, if you were to be thrown ashore with nothing in the world but an old jersey and a bag of tobacco, two hundred miles short of the port where you hoped to land with fifteen hundred well-earned pounds in your pocket."

"My dear sir," said Frank, after a pause, "whatsoever comes from our Father's hand must be meant in love. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'"

A quaint wince passed over the stranger's face.

"Father, sir? That fifteen hundred pounds was going to my father's hand, from whosesoever hand it came, or the loss of it. And now what is to become of the poor old man, that hussy Dame Fortune only knows—if she knows her own mind an hour together, which I very much doubt. I worked early and late for that money, sir; up to my knees in mud and water. Let it be enough for your lofty demands on poor humanity, that I take my loss like a man, with a whistle and a laugh, instead of howling and cursing over it like a baboon. Let's talk of something else; and lend me five pounds, and a suit of clothes. I shan't run away with them, for as I've been thrown ashore here, here I shall stay."

Frank almost laughed at the free and easy request, though he felt at once pained by the man's irreligion, and abashed by his Stoicism;—would he have behaved even as well in such a case?

"I have not five pounds in the world."

"Good! we shall understand each other better."

"But the suit of clothes you shall have at once."

"Good again! Let it be your oldest; for I must do a little rock-scrambling here, for purposes of my own."

So off went Frank to fetch the clothes, puzzling over his new parishioner. The man was not altogether well bred, either in voice or manner; but there was an ease, a confidence, a sense of power, which made Frank feel that he had fallen in with a very strong nature; and one which had seen many men, and many lands, and profited by what it had seen.

When he returned, he found the stranger busy at his ablutions, and gradually appearing as a somewhat dapper, handsome fellow, with a bright grey eye, a short nose, a firm, small mouth, a broad and upright forehead, across the left side of which ran a fearful scar.

"That's a shrewd mark," said he, as he caught Frank's eye fixed on it, while he sat coolly arranging himself on the bedside. "I got it in fair fight, though, by a Crow's tomahawk in the Rocky Mountains. And here's another token (lifting up his black curls), which a Greek robber gave me in the Morea. I've another under my head, for which I have to thank a Tartar, and one or two more little remembrances of flood and field up and down me. Perhaps they may explain to you why I take life and death so coolly. I've looked too often at the little razor-bridge which parts them, to care much for either. Now,

don't let me trouble you any longer. You have your flock to see to, I don't doubt. You'll find me at church on Sunday. I always do at Rome as Rome does."

"Then you will stay away," said Frank, with a sad smile.

"Ah? No. Church is respectable and aristocratic; and there one don't get sent to a place unmentionable, ten times an hour, by some inspired tinker. Beside, country people like the Doctor to go to church with their betters; and the very fellows who go to the Methodist meeting themselves would think it *infra dig.* in me to walk in there. Now, good-bye—though I haven't introduced myself—not knowing the name of my kind preserver."

"My name is Frank Headley, Curate of the Parish," said Frank, smiling: though he saw the man was rattling on for the purpose of preventing his talking on serious matters.

"And mine is Tom Thurnall, F.R.C.S., Licentiate of the Universities of Paris, Glasgow, and whilome surgeon of the good clipper Hesperus, which you saw wrecked last night. So, farewell!"

"Come over with me, and have some breakfast."

"No, thanks; you'll be busy. I'll screw some out of old bottles here"

"And now," said Tom Thurnall to himself, as Frank left the room, "to begin life again with an old penknife and a pound of honeydew. I wonder which of them got my girdle. I'll stick here till I find out

that one thing, and stop the notes by to-day's post if I can but recollect them all;—if I could but stop the nugget, too!"

So saying, he walked down into the surgery, and looked round. Everything was in confusion. Cobwebs were over the bottles, and armies of mites played at bo-peep behind them. He tried a few drawers, and found that they stuck fast; and when he at last opened one, its contents were two old dried-up horse-balls, and a dirty tobacco-pipe. He took down a jar marked Epsom salts, and found it full of Welsh snuff; the next, which was labelled cinnamon, contained blue vitriol. The spatula and pill-roller were crusted with deposits of every hue. The pill-box drawer had not a dozen whole boxes in it; and the counter was a quarter of an inch deep in deposit of every vegetable and mineral matter, including ends of string, tobacco ashes, and broken glass.

Tom took up a dirty duster, and set to work coolly to clear up, whistling away so merrily that he brought in Heale.

"I'm doing a little in the way of business, you see."

"Then you really are a professional practitioner, sir, as Mr. Headley informs me: though, of course, I don't doubt the fact?" said Heale, summoning up all the little courage he had, to ask the question with.

"F.R.C.S. London, Paris, and Glasgow. Easy enough to write and ascertain the fact. Have been medical officer to a poor-law union, and to a Brazilian

man-of-war. Have seen three choleras, two army fevers, and yellow-jack without end. Have doctored gunshot wounds in the two Texan wars, in one Paris revolution, and in the Schleswig-Holstein row; beside accident practice in every country from California to China, and round the world and back again. There's a fine nest of Mr. Weekes's friend (if not creation), Acarus Horridus," and Tom went on dusting and arranging.

Heale had been fairly taken aback by the imposing list of acquirements, and looked at his guest awhile with considerable awe: suddenly a suspicion flashed across him, which caused him (not unseen by Tom) a start and a look of self-congratulatory wisdom. He next darted out of the shop, and returned as rapidly, rather redder about the eyes, and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"But, sir, though, though"—began he—"but, of course you will allow me, being a stranger—and as a man of business—all I have to say is, if—that is to say——"

"You want to know why, if I've had all these good businesses, why I haven't kept them?"

"Ex—actly," stammered Heale much relieved.

"A very sensible and business-like question: but you needn't have been so delicate about asking it as to want a screw before beginning."

"Ah, you're a wag, sir," keckled the old man.

"I'll tell you frankly; I have an old father, sir,—a gentleman, and a scholar, and a man of science;

once in as good a country practice as man could have, till, God help him, he went blind, sir—and I had to keep him, and have still. I went over the world to make my fortune and never made it; and sent him home what I did make, and little enough too. At last, in my despair, I went to the diggings, and had a pretty haul—I needn't say how much. That matters little now; for I suppose it's at the bottom of the sea. There's my story, sir, and a poor one enough it is,—for the dear old man, at least." And Tom's voice trembled so as he told it, that old Heale believed every word, and, what is more, being—like most hard drinkers—not "unused to the melting mood," wiped his eyes fervently, and went off for another drop of comfort; while Tom dusted and arranged on, till the shop began to look quite smart and business-like

"Now, sir!"—when the old man came back—"business is business, and beggars must not be choosers. I don't want to meddle with your practice; I know the rules of the profession: but if you'll let me sit here and mix your medicines for you, you'll have the more time to visit your patients, that's clear,"—and, perhaps (thought he), to drink your brandy-and-water,—"and when any of them are poisoned by me, it will be time to kick me out. All I ask is, bed and board. Don't be frightened for your spirit-bottle, I can drink water; I've done it many a time, for a week together, in the prairies, and been thankful for a half-pint in the day."

"But, sir, your dignity as a——"

"Fiddlesticks for dignity; I must live, sir. Only lend me a couple of sheets of paper and two queen's heads, that I may tell my friends my whereabouts,—and go and talk it over with Mrs. Heale. We must never act without consulting the ladies."

That day Tom sent off the following epistle:—

"*To* CHARLES SHUTER, Esq., M.D., *St. Mumpsimus's Hospital, London.*

"DEAR CHARLEY—

" 'I do adjure thee, by old pleasant days,
Quartier Latin, and neatly-shod grisettes,
By all our wanderings in quaint by-ways,
By ancient frolics, and by ancient debts,'

"Go to the United Bank of Australia forthwith, and stop the notes whose numbers—all, alas! which I can recollect—are enclosed. Next, lend me five pounds. Next, send me down, as quick as possible, five pounds' worth of decent drugs, as per list; and—if you can borrow me one—a tolerable microscope, and a few natural history books, to astound the yokels here with: for I was shipwrecked here last night, after all at a dirty little west-country port, and what's worse, robbed of all I had made at the diggings, and start fair, once more, to run against cruel Dame Fortune, as Colston did against the Indians, without a shirt to my back. Don't be a hospitable fellow, and ask me to come up and camp with you. Mumpsimus's and all old faces would be a great temptation: but here I

must stick till I hear of my money, and physic the natives for my daily bread."

To his father he wrote thus, not having the heart to tell the truth:—

"*To* EDWARD THURNALL, Esq., M.D., *Whitbury.*

"MY DEAREST OLD FATHER—I hope to see you again in a few weeks, as soon as I have settled a little business here, where I have found a capital opening for a medical man. Meanwhile let Mark or Mary write and tell me how you are—and for sending you every penny I can spare, trust me. I have not had all the luck I expected; but am as hearty as a bull, and as merry as a cricket, and fall on my legs, as of old, like a cat. I long to come to you; but I mustn't yet. It is near three years since I had a sight of that blessed white head, which is the only thing I care for under the sun, except Mark and little Mary—big Mary I suppose she is now, and engaged to be married to some 'bloated aristocrat.' Best remembrances to old Mark Armsworth.

"Your affectionate son,

"T. T."

"Mr. Heale," said Tom next, "are we Whigs or Tories here?"

"Why—ahem, sir, my Lord Scoutbush, who owns most hereabouts, and my Lord Minchampstead, who has bought Carcarrow moors above,—very old Whig

connections, both of them; but Mr. Trebooze, of Trebooze, he, again, thorough-going Tory—very good patient he was once, and may be again—ha! ha! Gay young man, sir—careless of his health; so you see as a medical man, sir——"

"Which is the liberal paper? This one? Very good." And Tom wrote off to the liberal paper that evening a letter, which bore fruit ere the week's end, in the shape of five columns, headed thus:—

WRECK OF THE "HESPERUS."

"The following detailed account of this lamentable catastrophe has been kindly contributed by the graphic pen of the only survivor, Thomas Thurnall, Esquire, F.R.C.S., &c. &c. &c., late surgeon on board the ill-fated vessel." Which five columns not only put a couple of guineas into Tom's pocket, but, as he intended they should, brought him before the public as an interesting personage, and served as a very good advertisement to the practice which Tom had already established in fancy.

Tom had not worked long, however, before the Coast-guard Lieutenant bustled in. He had trotted home to shave and get his breakfast, and was trotting back again to the shore.

"Hillo, Heale! can I see the fellow who was saved last night?"

"I am that fellow," says Tom.

"The dickens you are! you seem to have fallen on your legs quickly enough."

"It's a trick I've had occasion to learn, sir," says Tom. "Can I prescribe for you this morning?"

"Medicine?" roars the Lieutenant, laughing. "Catch mé at it! No; I want you to come down to the shore, and help to identify goods and things. The wind has chopped up north, and is blowing dead on; and, with this tide, we shall have a good deal on shore. So, if you're strong enough——"

"I'm always strong enough to do my duty," said Tom.

"Hum! Very good sentiment, young man. Always strong enough for duty.—Hum! worthy of Nelson; said pretty much the same, didn't he? something about duty I know it was, and always thought it uncommon fine.—Now, then, what can you tell me about this business?"

It was a sad story; but no sadder than hundreds beside. They had been struck by the gale to the westward two days before, with the wind south; had lost their foretopmast and boltsprit, and become all but unmanageable; had tried during a lull to rig a jury-mast, but were prevented by the gale, which burst on them with fresh fury from the south-west, with very heavy rain and fog; had passed a light in the night, which they took for Scilly, but which must have been the Longships; had still fancied that they were safe, running up Channel with a wide berth, when, about sunset, the gale had chopped again to north-west;—and Tom knew no more. "I was standing on the poop with the captain about ten o'clock.

The last words he said to me were,—'If this lasts, we shall see Brest harbour to-morrow,' when she struck, and stopped dead. I was chucked clean off the poop, and nearly overboard; but brought up in the mizen rigging. Where the captain went, poor fellow, Heaven alone knows; for I never saw him after. The main-mast went like a carrot. The mizen stood. I ran round to the cabin-doors. There were four men steering; the wheel had broke out of the poor fellows' hands, and knocked them over,—broken their limbs, I believe. I was stooping to pick them up, when a sea came into the waist, and then aft, washing me in through the saloon-doors, among the poor half-dressed women and children. Queer sight, Lieutenant! I've seen a good many, but never worse than that. I bolted to my cabin, tied my notes and gold round me, and out again."

"Didn't desert the poor things?"

"Couldn't if I'd tried; they clung to me like a swarm of bees. 'Gad, sir, that was hard lines! to have all the pretty women one had waltzed with every evening through the Trades, and the little children one had been making playthings for, holding round one's knees, and screaming to the doctor to save them. And how the * * * * was I to save them, sir?" cried Tom, with a sudden burst of feeling, which, as in so many Englishmen, exploded in anger to avoid melting in tears.

"Ought to be a law against it, sir," growled the Lieutenant; "against women-folk and children going

to sea. It's murder and cruelty. I've been wrecked, scores of times; but it was with honest men, who could shift for themselves, and if they were drowned, drowned; but didn't screech and catch hold—I couldn't stand that! Well?"

"Well, there was a pretty little creature, an officer's widow, and two children. I caught her under one arm, and one of the children under the other;—said 'I can't take you all at once; I'll come back for the rest, one by one.'—Not that I believed it; but anything to stop the screaming; and I did hope to put some of them out of the reach of the sea, if I could get them forward. I knew the forecastle was dry, for the chief officer was firing there. You heard him?"

"Yes, five or six times; and then he stopped suddenly."

"He had reason.—We got out. I could see her nose up in the air forty feet above us, covered with fore-cabin passengers. I warped the lady and the children upward—Heaven knows how; for the sea was breaking over us very sharp—till we were at the mainmast stump, and holding on by the wreck of it. I felt the ship stagger as if a whale had struck her, and heard a roar and a swish behind me, and looked back—just in time to see mizen, and poop, and all the poor women and children in it, go bodily, as if they had been shaved off with a knife. I suppose that altered her balance; for before I could turn again she dived forward, and then rolled over upon her beam

ends to leeward; and I saw the sea walk in over her from stem to stern like one white wall, and I was washed from my hold, and it was all over."

"What became of the lady?"

"I saw a white thing flash by to leeward;—what's the use of asking?"

"But the child you held?"

"I didn't let it go till there was good reason."

"Eh?"

Tom tapped the points of his fingers smartly against the side of his head, and then went on, in the same cynical drawl, which he had affected throughout:—

"I heard that—against a piece of timber as we went overboard. And, as a medical man, I considered after that, that I had done my duty. Pretty little boy it was, just six years old: and such a fancy for drawing."

The Lieutenant was quite puzzled by Tom's seeming nonchalance.

"What do you mean, sir? Did you leave the child to perish?"

"Confound you, sir! If you will have plain English, here it is. I tell you I heard the child's skull crack like an egg-shell! There, let's talk no more about it, or the whole matter. It's a bad business, and I'm not answerable for it, or you either; so let's go and do what we are answerable for, and identify——"

"Sir! you will be so good as to recollect," said the Lieutenant, with ruffled plumes.

"I do; I do! I beg your pardon a thousand times, I'm sure, for being so rude: but you know as well as I, sir, there are a good many things in the world which won't stand too much thinking over; and last night was one."

"Very true, very true; but how did you get ashore?'

"I get ashore? Oh, well enough! Why not?"

"'Gad, sir, you were near enough being drowned at last; only that girl's pluck saved you."

"Well; but it did save me: and here I am, as I knew I should be when I first struck out from the ship."

"Knew!—that is a bold word for mortal man at sea."

"I suppose it is: but we doctors, you see, get into the way of looking at things as men of science; and the ground of science is experience; and, to judge from experience, it takes more to kill me than I have yet met with. If I had been going to be snuffed out, it would have happened long ago."

"Hum! It's well to carry a cheerful heart; but the pitcher goes often to the well, and comes home broken at last."

"I must be a gutta-percha pitcher, I think, then, or else—

"'There's a sweet little cherub who sits up aloft,' etc.

as Dibdin has it. Now, look at the facts yourself, sir," continued the stranger, with a recklessness half true, half assumed to escape from the malady of

thought. "I don't want to boast, sir; I only want to show you that I have some practical reason for wearing as my motto—'Never say die.' I have had the cholera twice, and yellow-jack beside: five several times I have had bullets through me; I have been bayoneted and left for dead; I have been shipwrecked three times—and once, as now, I was the only man who escaped; I have been fatted by savages for baking and eating, and got away with a couple of friends only a day or two before the feast. One really narrow chance I had, which I never expected to squeeze through: but, on the whole, I have taken full precautions to prevent its recurrence."

"What was that, then?"

"I have been hanged, sir," said the doctor quietly.

"Hanged?" cried the Lieutenant, facing round upon his strange companion with a visage which asked plainly enough—"You hanged?" I don't believe you; and if you have been hanged, what have you been doing to get hanged?"

"You need not take care of your pockets, sir,—neither robbery nor murder was it which brought me to the gallows; but innocent bug-hunting. The fact is, I was caught by a party of Mexicans, during the last war, straggling after plants and insects, and hanged as a spy. I don't blame the fellows: I had no business where I was; and they could not conceive that a man would risk his life for a few butterflies."

"But if you were hanged, sir——"

"Why did I not die?—By my usual luck. The

fellows were clumsy, and the noose would not work; so that the Mexican doctor, who meant to dissect me, brought me round again; and being a freemason, as I am, stood by me,—got me safe off, and cheated the devil."

The worthy Lieutenant walked on in silence, stealing furtive glances at Tom, as if he had been a guest from the other world, but not disbelieving his story in the least. He had seen, as most old navy men, so many strange things happen, that he was prepared to give credit to any tale when told, as Tom's was, with a straightforward and unboastful simplicity.

"There lives the girl who saved you," said he, as they passed Grace Harvey's door.

"Ah? I ought to call and pay my respects."

But Grace was not at home. The wreck had emptied the school; and Grace had gone after her scholars to the beach.

"We couldn't keep her away, weak as she was," said a neighbour, "as soon as she heard the poor corpses were coming ashore,"

"Hum?" said Tom. "True woman. Quaint,—that appetite for horrors the sweet creatures have. Did you ever see a man hanged, Lieutenant?—No? If you had, you would have seen two women in the crowd to one man. Can you make out the philosophy of that?"

"I suppose they like it, as some people do hot peppers."

"Or donkeys thistles;—find a little pain pleasant!

I had a patient once in France, who read Dumas' 'Crimes Célèbres' all the week, and the 'Vies des Saints' on Sundays, and both, as far as I could see, for just the same purpose,—to see how miserable people could be, and how much pinching and pulling they could bear."

So they walked on, along a sheep-path, and over the Spur, and down to the Cove.

It was such a morning as often follows a gale, when the great firmament stares down upon the ruin which it has made, bright and clear, and bold; and seems to say, with shameless smile,—"There, I have done it; and am as merry as ever after it all!" Beneath a cloudless sky, the breakers, still grey and foul from the tempest, were tumbling in before a cold northern breeze. Half a mile out at sea, the rough backs of the Chough and Crow loomed black and sulky in the foam. At their feet, the rocks and shingle of the Cove were alive with human beings—groups of women and children clustering round a corpse or a chest; sailors, knee-deep in the surf hauling at floating spars and ropes; oil-skinned coast-guardsmen pacing up and down in charge of goods, while groups of farmers' men, who had hurried down from the villages inland, lounged about on the top of the cliff, looking sulkily on, hoping for plunder: and yet half afraid to mingle with the sailors below, who looked on them as an inferior race, and refused, in general, to intermarry with them.

The Lieutenant plainly held much the same

opinion ; for as a party of them tried to descend the narrow path to the beach, he shouted after them to come back.

"Eh ! you won't ?" and out rattled from its scabbard the old worthy's sword. "Come back, I say, you loafing, miching, wrecking crow-keepers ; there are no pickings for you here. Brown, send those fellows back with the bayonet. None but blue-jackets allowed on the beach !" And the labourers go up again, grumbling.

"Can't trust those landsharks. They'll plunder even the rings off a corpse's fingers. They think every wreck a godsend. I've known them, after they've been driven off, roll great stones over the cliff at night on the coast-guard, just out of spite ; while these blue-jackets here—I can depend on them. Can you tell me the reason of that, as you seem a bit of a philosopher ?"

"It is easy enough ; the sailors have a fellow-feeling with sailors, and the landsmen have none. Besides, the sailors are finer fellows, body and soul ; and the reason is that they have been brought up to face danger, and the landsmen haven't."

"Well," said the Lieutenant, "unless a man has been taught to look death in the face, he never will grow up, I believe, to be much of a man at all."

"Danger, my good sir, is a better schoolmaster than all your new model schools, diagrams, and scientific apparatus. It made our forefathers the masters of the sea, though they never heard of

popular science; and I dare say couldn't, one out of ten of them, spell their own names."

This sentiment elicited from the Lieutenant a grunt of approbation, as Tom intended that it should do; shrewdly arguing that the old martinet was no friend to the modern superstition, that all which is required to cast out the devil is a smattering of the 'ologies.

"Will the gentleman see the corpses?" asked Brown; "we have fourteen already;"—and he led the way to where, along the shingle at high-water mark, lay a ghastly row, some fearfully bruised and mutilated, cramped together by the death-agony; others with the peaceful smile which showed that they had sunk to sleep in that strange water-death, amid a wilderness of pleasant dreams. Strong men lay there, little children, women, whom the sailors' wives had covered decently with cloaks and shawls; and at their heads stood Grace Harvey, motionless, with folded hands, gazing into the dead faces with her great solemn eyes. Her mother and Captain Willis sood by, watching her with a sort of superstitious awe. She took no notice either of Thurnall or of the Lieutenant, as the doctor identified the bodies one by one, without a remark which indicated any human emotion.

"A very sensible man, Willis," said the Lieutenant apart, as Tom knelt awhile to examine the crushed features of a sailor; and then looking up said simply,—

"James Macgillivray, second mate. Cause of death, contusions; probably by the fall of the main-mast."

"A very sensible man, and has seen a deal of life, and kept his eyes open; but a terrible hard-plucked one. Talked like a book to me all the way; but, be hanged if I don't think he has a thirty-two pound shot under his ribs instead of a heart.—Doctor Thurnall, that is Miss Harvey,—the young person who saved your life last night."

Tom rose, took off his hat (Frank Headley's), and made her a bow, of which an ambassador need not have been ashamed.

"I am exceedingly shocked that Miss Harvey should have run so much danger for anything so worthless as my life."

She looked up at him, and answered, not him, but her own thoughts.

"Strange, is it not, that it was a duty to pray for all these poor things last night, and a sin to pray for them this morning?"

"Grace, dear!" interposed her mother, "don't you hear the gentleman thanking you?"

She started, as one awaking out of a dream, and looked into his face, blushing scarlet.

"Good heavens, what a beautiful creature!" said Tom to himself, as quite a new emotion passed through him. Quite new it was, whatsoever it was; and he was aware of it. He had had his passions, his intrigues, in past years, and prided himself—few men more—on understanding women; but the expression of the face, and the strange words with which she had greeted him, added to the broad fact

of her having offered her own life for his, raised in him a feeling of chivalrous awe and admiration, which no other woman had ever called up.

"Madam," he said again; "I can repay you with nothing but thanks: but, to judge from your conduct last night, you are one of those people who will find reward enough in knowing that you have done a noble and heroic action."

She looked at him very steadfastly, blushing still. Thurnall, be it understood, was (at least, while his face was in the state in which Heaven intended it to be, half hidden in a silky-brown beard) a very good-looking fellow; and (to use Mark Armsworth's description) "as hard as a nail; as fresh as a rose; and stood on his legs like a game-cock." Moreover, as Willis said approvingly, he had spoken to her "as if he was a duke, and she was a duchess." Besides, by some blessed moral law, the surest way to make oneself love any human being is to go and do him a kindness; and therefore Grace had already a tender interest in Tom, not because he had saved her, but she him. And so it was, that a strange new emotion passed through her heart also, though so little understood by her, that she put it forthwith into words.

"You might repay me," she said in a sad and tender tone.

"You have only to command me," said Tom, wincing a little as the words passed his lips.

"Then turn to God, now in the day of His mercies. Unless you have turned to Him already."

One glance at Tom's rising eyebrows told her what he thought upon those matters.

She looked at him sadly, lingeringly, as if conscious that she ought not to look too long, and yet unable to withdraw her eyes.—"Ah! and such a precious soul as yours must be; a precious soul—all taken, and you alone left! God must have high things in store for you. He must have a great work for you to do. Else, why are you not as one of these! Oh, think! where would you have been at this moment if God had dealt with you as with them?"

"Where I am now, I suppose," said Tom quietly.

"Where you are now?"

"Yes: where I ought to be. I am where I ought to be now. I suppose if I had found myself anywhere else this morning, I should have taken it as a sign that I was wanted there, and not here."

Grace heaved a sigh at words which were certainly startling. The Stoic optimism of the world-hardened doctor was new and frightful to her.

"My good madam," said he, "the part of Scripture which I appreciate best, just now, is the case of poor Job, where Satan has leave to rob and torment him to the utmost of his wicked will, provided only he does not touch his life. I wish," he went on, lowering his voice, "to tell you something which I do not wish publicly talked of; but in which you may help me. I had nearly fifteen hundred pounds about me when I came ashore last night, sewed in a belt round my waist. It is gone. That is all."

Tom looked steadily at her as he spoke. She turned pale, red, pale again, her lips quivered: but she spoke no word.

"She has it, as I live!" thought Tom to himself. "'Frailty, thy name is woman!' The canting, little, methodistical humbug! She must have slipped it off my waist as I lay senseless. I suppose she means to keep it in pawn, till I redeem it by marrying her. Well I might take an uglier mate certainly; but when I do enter into the bitter bonds of matrimony, I should like to be sure, beforehand, that my wife was not a thief!"

Why, then, did not Tom, if he were so very sure of Grace's having the belt, charge her with the theft? because he had found out already how popular she was, and was afraid of merely making himself unpopular; because, too, he took for granted that whosoever had his belt, had hidden it already beyond the reach of a search warrant; and, because, after all, an honourable shame restrained him. It would be a poor return to the woman who had saved his life to charge her with theft the next morning; and more, there was something about that girl's face which had made him feel that, if he had seen her put the belt into her pocket before his eyes, he could not have found the heart to have sent her to gaol. "No!" thought he; "I'll get it out of her, or whoever has it, and stay here till I do get it. One place is as good as another to me."

But what was Grace saying?

She had turned, after two or three minutes' astonished silence, to her mother and Captain Willis—

"Belt! Mother! Uncle! What is this? The gentleman has lost a belt?"

"Dear me!—a belt! Well, child, that's not much to grieve over, when the Lord has spared his life and soul from the pit!" said her mother, somewhat testily.

"You don't understand. A belt, I say, full of money—fifteen hundred pounds; he lost it last night. Uncle! Speak, quick! Did you see a belt?"

Willis shook his head meditatively. "I don't, and yet I do, and yet I don't again. My brains were well-nigh washed out of me, I know. However, sir, I'll think, and talk it over with you too; for if it be in the village, found it ought to be, and will be, with God's help."

"Found?" cried Grace, in so high a key, that Tom entreated her to calm herself, and not make the matter public.—"Found? yes; and shall be found, if there be justice in heaven. Shame that west-country folk should turn robbers and wreckers! Mariners, too, and mariners' wives, who should be praying for those who are wandering far away, each man with his life in his hand! Ah, what a world! When will it end? soon, too soon, when west-country folk rob shipwrecked men! But you will find your belt; yes, sir, you will find it. Wait till you have learnt to do without it. Man does not live by bread alone. Do you think he lives by gold? Only be patient;

and when you are worthy of it, you shall find it again, in the Lord's good time."

To the doctor this seemed a mere burst of jargon, invented for the purpose of hiding guilt; and his faith in womankind was not heightened when he heard Grace's mother say, *sotto voce* to Willis, that—"In wrecks, and fires, and such like, a many people complained of having lost more than ever they had."

"Oh ho! my old lady, is that the way the fox is gone?" quoth Tom to that trusty counsellor, himself; and began carefully scrutinising Mrs. Harvey's face. It had been very handsome: it was still very clever: but the eyebrows, crushed together downwards above her nose, and rising high at the outer corners, indicated, as surely as the restless down-dropt eye, a character self-conscious, furtive, capable of great inconsistencies, possibly of great deceits."

"You don't look me in the face, old lady!" quoth Tom to himself. "Very well! between you two it lies; unless that old gentleman implicates himself also, in his approaching confession."

He took his part at once. "Well, well, you will oblige me by saying nothing more about it. After all, as this good lady says, the loss of a little money is not worth complaining over, when one has escaped with life. Good morning; and many thanks for all your kindness!"

And Tom made another grand bow, and went off to the Lieutenant.

Grace looked after him awhile, as one stunned; and then turned to her mother.

"Let us go home."

"Go home? Why there, dear?"

"Let me go home; you need not come. I am sick of this world. Is it not enough to have misery and death (and she pointed to the row of corpses), but we must have sin, too, wherever we turn! Meanness and theft:—and ingratitude too!" she added, in a lower tone.

She went homeward; her mother, in spite of her entreaties, accompanied her; and, for some reason or other, did not lose sight of her all that day, or for several days after.

Meanwhile, Willis had beckoned the Doctor aside. His face was serious and sad, and his lips were trembling.

"This is a very shocking business, sir. Of course, you've told the Lieutenant."

"Not yet, my good sir."

"But—excuse my boldness; what plainer way of getting it back from the rascal, whoever he is?"

"Wait awhile," said Tom; "I have my reasons."

"But, sir—for the honour of the place, the matter should be cleared up; and till the thief's found, suspicion will lie on a dozen innocent men; myself among the rest, for that matter."

"You?" said Tom, smiling. "I don't know who I have the honour to speak to; but you don't look much like a gentleman who wishes for a trip to Botany Bay."

The old man chuckled, and then his face dropped again.

"I'm glad you take the thing so like a man, sir; but it is really no laughing matter. It's a scoundrelly job, only fit for a Maltee off the Nix Mangeery. If it had been a lot of those carter fellows that had carried you up, I could have understood it; wrecking's born in the bone of them: but for those four sailors that carried you up, 'gad sir! they'd have been shot sooner. I've known 'em from boys!" and the old man spoke quite fiercely, and looked up; his lip trembling, and his eye moist.

"There's no doubt that you are honest—whoever is not," thought Tom; so he ventured a further question.

"Then you were by all the while?"

"All the while? Who more? And that's just what puzzles me."

"Pray don't speak loud," said Tom. "I have my reasons for keeping things quiet."

"I tell you, sir. I held the maid, and big John Beer (Gentleman Jan they call him) held me; and the maid had both her hands tight in your belt. I saw it as plain as I see you, just before the wave covered us, though little I thought what was in it; and should never have remembered you had a belt at all, if I hadn't thought over things in the last five minutes."

"Well, sir, I am lucky in having come straight to the fountain head; and must thank you for telling me so frankly what you know."

"Tell you, sir? What else should one do but tell you? I only wish I knew more; and more I'll know, please the Lord. And you'll excuse an old sailor (though not of your rank, sir) saying that he wonders a little that you don't take the plain means of knowing more yourself."

"May I take the liberty of asking your name?" said Tom; who saw by this time that the old man was worthy of his confidence.

"Willis, at your service, sir. Captain they call me, though I'm none. Sailing-master I was, on board of His Majesty's ship Niobe, 84;" and Willis raised his hat with such an air, that Tom raised his in return.

"Then, Captain Willis, let me have five words with you apart; first thanking you for having helped to save my life."

"I'm very glad I did, sir; and thanked God for it on my knees this morning: but you'll excuse me, sir, I was thinking—and no blame to me—more of saving my poor maid's life than yours, and no offence to you, for I hadn't the honour of knowing you; but for her, I'd have been drowned a dozen times over."

"No offence, indeed," said Tom; and hardly knew what to say next. "May I ask, is she your niece? I heard her call you uncle."

"Oh, no—no relation; only I look on her as my own, poor thing, having no father; and she always calls me uncle, as most do us old men in the West."

"Well, then, sir," said Tom, "you will answer for none of the four sailors having robbed me?"

"I've said it, sir."

"Was any one else close to her when we were brought ashore?"

"No one but I. I brought her round myself."

"And who took her home?"

"Her mother and I."

"Very good. And you never saw the belt after she had her hands in it?"

"No; I'm sure not."

"Was her mother by her when she was lying on the rock?"

"No; came up afterwards, just as I got her on her feet."

"Humph! What sort of a character is her mother?"

"Oh, a tidy, God-fearing person, enough. One of these Methodist class-leaders, Brianites they call themselves. I don't hold with them, though I do go to chapel at whiles: but there are good ones among them; and I do believe she's one, though she's a little fretful at times. Keeps a little shop that don't pay over well; and those preachers live on her a good deal, I think. Creeping into widows' houses, and making long prayers—you know the text."

"Well, now, Captain Willis, I don't want to hurt your feelings; but do you not see that one of two things I must believe,—either that the belt was torn off my waist, and washed back into the sea, as it may have been after all; or else, that——"

"Do you mean that she took it?" asked Willis, in

voice of such indignant astonishment that Tom could only answer by a shrug of the shoulders.

"Who else could have done so, on your own showing?"

"Sir!" said Willis, slowly. "I thought I had to do with a gentleman: but I have my doubts of it now. A poor girl risks her life to drag you out of that sea, which but for her would have hove your body up to lie along with that line there,"—and Willis pointed to the ghastly row—"and your soul gone to give in its last account—You only know what that would have been like—And the first thing you do in payment is to accuse her of robbing you—her, that the very angels in heaven, I believe, are glad to keep company with;" and the old man turned and paced the beach in fierce excitement.

"Captain Willis," said Tom, "I'll trouble you to listen patiently and civilly to me a minute."

Willis stopped, drew himself up, and touched his hat mechanically.

"Just because I am a gentleman, I have not accused her; but held my tongue, and spoken to you in confidence. Now, perhaps, you will understand why I have said nothing to the Lieutenant."

Willis looked up at him.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I see now, and I'm sorry if I was rude; but it took me aback, and does still. I tell you, sir," quoth he, warming again, "whatever's true,—that's false. You're wrong there, if you never are wrong again; and you'll say so yourself, before

you've known her a week. No, sir! If you could make me believe that, I should never believe in goodness again on earth; but hold all men, and women too, and those above, for aught I know, that are greater than men and women, for liars together."

What was to be answered? Perhaps only what Tom did answer.

"My good sir, I will say no more. I would not have said that much if I had thought I should have pained you so. I suppose that the belt was washed into the sea. Why not?"

"Why not, indeed, sir? That's a much more Christian-like way of looking at it, than to blacken your own soul before God by suspecting that sweet innocent creature."

"Be it so, then. Only say nothing about the matter; and beg them to say nothing. If it be jammed among the rocks (as it might be, heavy as it is), talking about it will only set people looking for it; and I suppose there is a man or two, even in Aberalva, who would find fifteen hundred pounds a tempting bait. If, again, some one finds it, and makes away with it, he will only be the more careful to hide it if he knows that I am on the look-out. So just tell Miss Harvey and her mother that I think it must have been lost, and beg them to keep my secret. And now shake hands with me."

"The best plan, I believe, though bad, is the best," said Willis, holding out his hand; and he walked away sadly. His spirit had been altogether ruffled

by the imputation on Grace's character: and, besides, the chances of Thurnall's recovering his money seemed to him very small.

In five minutes he returned.

"If you would allow me, sir, there's a man there of whom I should like to ask one question. He who held me, and, after that, helped to carry you up;" and he pointed to Gentleman Jan, who stood, dripping from the waist downward, over a chest which he had just secured. "Just let us ask him, off-hand like, whether you had a belt on when he carried you up. You may trust him, sir. He'd knock you down as soon as look at you; but tell a lie, never."

They went to the giant; and, after cordial salutations, Tom propounded his question carelessly, with something like a white lie.

"It's no great matter; but it was an old friend, you see, with fittings for my knife and pistols, and I should be glad to find it again."

Jan thrust his red hand through his black curls, and meditated while the water surged round his ankles.

"Never a belt seed I, sir; leastwise while you were in my hands. I had you round the waist all the way up, so no one could have took it off. Why should they? And I undressed you myself; and nothing, save your presence, was there to get off, but jersey and trousers, and a lump of backy against your skin that looked the right sort."

"Have some, then," said Tom, pulling out the

honey-dew. "As for the belt, I suppose it's gone to choke the dog-fish."

And there the matter ended, outwardly at least; but only outwardly. Tom had his own opinion, gathered from Grace's seemingly guilty face, and to it he held, and called old Willis, in his heart, a simple-minded old dotard, who had been taken in by her hypocrisy.

And Tom accompanied the Lieutenant on his dreary errand that day, and several days after, through depositions before a justice, interviews with Lloyd's underwriters, and all the sad details which follow a wreck. Ere the week's end, forty bodies and more had been recovered, and brought up, ten or twelve at a time, to the churchyard, and upon the down, and laid side by side in one long shallow pit, where Frank Headley read over them the blessed words of hope, amid the sobs of women, and the grand silence of stalwart men, who knew not how soon their turn might come; and after each procession came Grace Harvey, with all her little scholars two and two, to listen to the funeral service; and when the last corpse was buried, they planted flowers upon the mound, and went their way again to learn hymns and read their Bible—little ministering angels to whom, as to most sailors' children, death was too common a sight to have in it aught of hideous or strange.

And this was the end of the good ship Hesperus, and all her gallant crew.

Verily, however important the mere animal lives

of men may be, and ought to be, at times, in our eyes, they never have been so, to judge from floods and earthquakes, pestilence and storm, in the eyes of Him who made and loves us all. It is a strange fact: better for us, instead of shutting our eyes to it because it interferes with our modern tenderness of pain, to ask honestly what it means.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAY TO WIN THEM.

So, for a week or more, Tom went on thrivingly enough, and became a general favourite in the town. Heale had no reason to complain of boarding him; for he had dinner and supper thrust on him every day by one and another, who were glad enough to have him for the sake of his stories, and songs, and endless fun and good-humour. The Lieutenant, above all, took the new-comer under his especial patronage, and was paid for his services in some of Tom's incomparable honey-dew. The old fellow soon found that the Doctor knew more than one old foreign station of his, and ended by pouring out to him his ancient wrongs, and the evil doings of the wicked admiral; all of which Tom heard with deepest sympathy, and surprise that so much naval talent had remained unappreciated by the unjust upper powers; and the Lieutenant, of course, reported of him accordingly to Heale.

A very civil spoken and intelligent youngster, Mr. Heale, d'ye see, to my mind; and you can't do better than accept his offer; for you'll find him a

great help, especially among the ladies, d'ye see. They like a good-looking chap, eh, Mrs. Jones?"

On the fourth day, by good fortune, what should come ashore but Tom's own chest—moneyless, alas! but with many useful matters still unspoilt by salt water. So, all went well, and indeed somewhat too well (if Tom would have let it), in the case of Miss Anna Maria Heale, the Doctor's daughter.

She was just such a girl as her father's daughter was likely to be; a short, stout, rosy, pretty body of twenty, with loose red lips, thwart black eyebrows, and right naughty eyes under them; of which Tom took good heed: for Miss Heale was exceedingly inclined, he saw, to make use of them in his behoof. Let others who have experience in, and taste for such matters, declare how she set her cap at the dapper young surgeon; how she rushed into the shop with sweet *abandon* ten times a-day, to find her father; and, not finding him, giggled, and blushed, and shook her shoulders, and retired, to peep at Tom through the glass door which led into the parlour; how she discovered that the muslin curtain of the said door would get out of order every ten minutes; and at last called Mr. Thurnall to assist her in rearranging it; how, bolder grown, she came into the shop to help herself to various matters, inquiring tenderly for Tom's health, and giggling vulgar sentiments about "absent friends, and hearts left behind;" in the hope of fishing out whether Tom had a sweetheart or not. How, at last, she was minded to confide her own health to

Tom, and to instal him as her private physician; yea, and would have made him feel her pulse on the spot, had he not luckily found some assafœtida, and therewith so perfumed the shop, that her "nerves" (of which she was always talking, though she had nerves only in the sense wherein a sirloin of beef has them) forced her to beat a retreat.

But she returned again to the charge next day, and rushed bravely through that fearful smell, cleaver in hand, as the carrier set down at the door a huge box, carriage-paid, all the way from London, and directed to Thomas Thurnall, Esquire. She would help to open it: and so she did, while old Heale and his wife stood by curious,—he with a maudlin wonder and awe (for he regarded Tom already as an altogether awful and incomprehensible "party"), and Mrs. Heale with a look of incredulous scorn, as if she expected the box to be a mere sham, filled probably with shavings. For (from reasons best known to herself) she had never looked pleasantly on the arrangement which entrusted to Tom the care of the bottles. She had given way from motives of worldly prudence, even of necessity; for Heale had been for the greater part of the week quite incapable of attending to his business: but black envy and spite were seething in her foolish heart, and seethed more and more fiercely when she saw that the box did not contain shavings, but valuables of every sort and kind—drugs, instruments, a large microscope (which Tom delivered out of Miss

Heale's fat clumsy fingers only by strong warnings that it would go off and shoot her), books full of prints of unspeakable monsters; and finally, a little packet, containing not one five-pound note, but four, and a letter which Tom, after perusing, put into Mr. Heale's hands, with a look of honest pride.

The Mumpsimus men, it appeared, had "sent round the hat" for him, and here were the results; and they would send the hat round again every month, if he wanted it; or, if he would come up, board, lodge, and wash him gratis. The great Doctor Bellairs, House Physician, and Carver, the famous operator (names at which Heale bowed his head and worshipped), sent compliments, condolences, offers of employment—never was so triumphant a testimonial; and Heale, in his simplicity, thought himself (as indeed he was) the luckiest of country doctors; while Mrs. Heale, after swelling and choking for five minutes, tottered into the back room, and cast herself on the sofa in violent hysterics.

As she came round again, Tom could not but overhear a little that passed. And this he overheard among other matters:—

"Yes, Mr. Heale, I see, I see too well, which your natural blindness, sir, and that fatal easiness of temper, will bring you to a premature grave within the paupers' precincts; and this young designing infidel, with his science and his magnifiers, and his callipers, and philosophy falsely so called, which in our true Protestant youth there was none, nor needed

none, to supplant you in your old age, and take the bread out of your grey hairs, which he will bring with sorrow to the grave, and mine likewise, which am like my poor infant here, of only too sensitive sensibilities! Oh, Anna Maria, my child, my poor lost child! which I can feel for the tenderness of the inexperienced heart! My Virgin Eve, which the Serpent has entered into your youthful paradise, and you will find, alas! too late, that you have warmed an adder into your bosom!"

"Oh, Ma, how indelicate!" giggled Anna Maria, evidently not displeased. "If you don't mind he will hear you, and I should never be able to look him in the face again." And therewith she looked round to the glass door.

What more passed, Tom did not choose to hear; for he began making all the bustle he could in the shop, merely saying to himself,—

"That flood of eloquence is symptomatic enough: I'll lay my life the old dame knows her way to the laudanum bottle."

Tom's next business was to ingratiate himself with the young curate. He had found out already, cunning fellow, that any extreme intimacy with Headley would not increase his general popularity; and, as we have seen already, he bore no great affection to "the cloth" in general: but the curate was an educated gentleman, and Tom wished for some more rational conversation than that of the Lieutenant and Heale. Besides, he was one of those men, with

whom the possession of power, sought at first from self-interest, has become a passion, a species of sporting, which he follows for its own sake. To whomsoever he met he must needs apply the moral stethoscope; sound him, lungs, heart, and liver; put his tissues under the microscope, and try conclusions on him to the uttermost. They might be useful hereafter; for knowledge was power: or they might not. What matter? Every fresh specimen of humanity which he examined was so much gained in general knowledge. Very true, Thomas Thurnall; provided the method of examination be the sound and the deep one, which will lead you down in each case to the real living heart of humanity: but what if your method be altogether a shallow and a cynical one, savouring much more of Gil Blas than of St. Paul, grounded not on faith and love for human beings, but on something very like suspicion and contempt? You will be but too likely, Doctor, to make the coarsest mistakes, when you fancy yourself most penetrating; to mistake the mere scurf and disease of the character for its healthy organic tissue, and to find out at last, somewhat to your confusion, that there are more things, not only in heaven, but in the earthiest of the earth, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. You have already set down Grace Harvey as a hypocrite, and Willis as a dotard. Will you make up your mind in the same foolishness of over-wisdom, that Frank Headley is a merely narrow-headed and hard-hearted pedant, quite unaware that

he is living an inner life of doubts, struggles, prayers, self-reproaches, noble hunger after an ideal of moral excellence, such as you, friend Tom, never yet dreamed of, which would be to you as an unintelligible gibber of shadows out of dreamland, but which is to him the only reality, the life of life, for which everything is to be risked and suffered? You treat his opinions (though he never thrusts them on you) about "the Church," and his duty, and the souls of his parishioners, with civil indifference, as much ado about nothing; and his rubrical eccentricities as puerilities. You have already made up your mind to "try and put a little common sense into him," not because it is any concern of yours whether he has common sense or not, but because you think that it will be better for you to have the parish at peace; but has it ever occurred to you how noble the man is, even in his mistakes? How that one thought, that the finest thing in the world is to be utterly good, and to make others good also, puts him three heavens at least above you, you most unangelic terrier-dog, bemired all day long by grubbing after vermin! What if his idea of "the Church" be somewhat too narrow for the year of grace 1854, is it no honour to him that he has such an idea at all; that there has risen up before him the vision of a perfect polity, a "Divine and wonderful Order," linking earth to heaven, and to the very throne of Him who died for men; witnessing to each of its citizens what the world tries to make him forget, namely, that he is the

child of God himself; and guiding and strengthening him, from the cradle to the grave, to do his Father's work? Is it a shame to him that he has seen that such a polity must exist, that he believes that it does exist; or that he thinks he finds it in its highest, if not its perfect form, in the most ancient and august traditions of his native land? True, he has much to learn, and you may teach him something of it; but you will find some day, Thomas Thurnall, that, granting you to be at one pole of the English character, and Frank Headley at the other, he is as good an Englishman as you, and can teach you more than you can him.

The two soon began to pass almost every evening together, pleasantly enough; for the reckless and rattling manner which Tom assumed with the mob, he laid aside with the curate, and showed himself as agreeable a companion as man could need; while Tom in his turn found that Headley was a rational and sweet-tempered man, who, even where he had made up his mind to differ, could hear an adverse opinion, put sometimes in a startling shape, without falling into any of those male hysterics of sacred horror, which are the usual refuge of ignorance and stupidity, terrified by what it cannot refute. And soon Tom began to lay aside the reserve which he usually assumed to clergymen, and to tread on ground which Headley would gladly have avoided. For, to tell the truth, ever since Tom had heard of Grace's intended dismissal, the curate's opinions had assumed

a practical importance in his eyes; and he had vowed in secret that, if his cunning failed him not, turned out of her school she should not be. Whether she had stolen his money or not, she had saved his life; and nobody should wrong her, if he could help it. Besides, perhaps she had not his money. The belt might have slipped off in the struggle; some one else might have taken it off in carrying him up; he might have mistaken the shame of innocence in her face for that of guilt. Be it as it might, he had not the heart to make the matter public, and contented himself with staying at Aberalva, and watching for every hint of his lost treasure.

By which it befell that he was thinking, the half of every day at least, about Grace Harvey; and her face was seldom out of his mind's eye; and the more he looked at it, either in fancy or in fact, the more did it fascinate him. They met but rarely, and then interchanged the most simple and modest of salutations: but Tom liked to meet her, would have gladly stopped to chat with her; however, whether from modesty or from a guilty conscience, she always hurried on in silence.

And she? Tom's request to her, through Willis, to say nothing about the matter, she had obeyed, as her mother also had done. That Tom suspected her was a thought which never crossed her mind; to suspect any one herself was in her eyes a sin; and if the fancy that this man or that, among the sailors who had carried Tom up to Heale's, might have been capable of the baseness, she thrust the thought from

her, and prayed to be forgiven for her uncharitable judgment.

But night and day there weighed on that strange and delicate spirit the shame of the deed, as heavily, if possible, as if she herself had been the doer. There was another soul in danger of perdition; another black spot of sin, making earth hideous to her. The village was disgraced; not in the public eyes, true: but in the eye of heaven, and in the eyes of that stranger for whom she was beginning to feel an interest more intense than she ever had done in any human being before. Her saintliness (for Grace was a saint in the truest sense of that word) had long since made her free of that "communion of saints" which consists not in Pharisaic isolation from "the world," not in the mutual flatteries and congratulations of a self-conceited clique; but which bears the sins and carries the sorrows of all around: whose atmosphere is disappointed hopes and plans for good, and the indignation which hates the sin because it loves the sinner, and sacred fear and pity for the self-inflicted miseries of those who might be (so runs the dream, and will run till it becomes a waking reality) strong, and free, and safe, by being good and wise. To such a spirit this bold cunning man had come, stiff-necked and heaven-defiant, a "brand plucked from the burning:" and yet equally unconscious of his danger, and thankless for his respite. Given, too, as it were, into her hands; tossed at her feet out of the very mouth of the pit,—why but that she might

save him? A far duller heart, a far narrower imagination than Grace's would have done what Grace's did—concentrate themselves round the image of that man with all the love of woman. For, ere long, Grace found that she did love that man, as a woman loves but once in her life; perhaps in all time to come. She found that her heart throbbed, her cheek flushed, when his name was mentioned; that she watched, almost unawares to herself, for his passing; and she was not ashamed at the discovery. It was a sort of melancholy comfort to her that there was a great gulf fixed between them. His station, his acquirements, his great connections and friends in London (for all Tom's matters were the gossip of the town, as, indeed, he took care that they should be), made it impossible that he should ever think of her; and therefore she held herself excused for thinking of him, without any fear of that "self-seeking," and "inordinate affection," and "unsanctified passions," which her religious books had taught her to dread. Besides, he was not "a Christian." That five minutes on the shore had told her that; and even if her station had been the same as his, she must not be "unequally yoked with an unbeliever." And thus the very hopelessness of her love became its food and strength; the feeling which she would have checked with maidenly modesty, had it been connected even remotely with marriage, was allowed to take immediate and entire dominion; and she held herself permitted to keep him next her heart of hearts, because she

could do nothing for him but pray for his conversion.

And pray for him she did, the noble, guileless girl, day and night, that he might be converted; that he might prosper, and become—perhaps rich, at least useful; a mighty instrument in some good work. And then she would build up one beautiful castle in the air after another, out of her fancies about what such a man, whom she had invested in her own mind with all the wisdom of Solomon, might do if his "talents were sanctified." Then she prayed that he might recover his lost gold—when it was good for him; that he might discover the thief: no, that would only involve fresh shame and sorrow: that the thief, then, might be brought to repentance, and confession, and restitution. That was the solution of the dark problem, and for that she prayed; while her face grew sadder and sadder day by day.

For a while, over and above the pain which the theft caused her, there came—how could it be otherwise?—sudden pangs of regret that this same love was hopeless, at least upon this side of the grave. Inconsistent they were with the chivalrous unselfishness of her usual temper; and as such she dashed them from her, and conquered them, after a while, by a method which many a woman knows too well. It was but "one cross more;" a natural part of her destiny—the child of sorrow and heaviness of heart. Pleasure in joy she was never to find on earth; she would find it, then, in grief. And nursing her own

melancholy, she went on her way, sad, sweet, and steadfast, and lavished more care and tenderness, and even gaiety, than ever upon her neighbours' children, because she knew that she should never have a child of her own.

But there is a third damsel, to whom, whether more or less engaging than Grace Harvey or Miss Heale, my readers must needs be introduced. Let Miss Heale herself do it, with eyes full of jealous curiosity.

"There is a foreign letter for Mr. Thurnall, marked Montreal, and sent on here from Whitbury," said she, one morning at breakfast, and in a significant tone; for the address was evidently in a woman's hand.

"For me—ah, yes; I see," said Tom, taking it carelessly, and thrusting it into his pocket.

"Won't you read it at once, Mr. Thurnall? I'm sure you must be anxious to hear from friends abroad;" with an emphasis on the word friends.

"I have a good many acquaintances all over the world, but no friends that I am aware of," said Tom, and went on with his breakfast.

"Ah—but some people are more than friends. Are the Montreal ladies pretty, Mr. Thurnall?"

"Don't know; for I never was there."

Miss Heale was silent, being mystified: and, moreover, not quite sure whether Montreal was in India or in Australia, and not willing to show her ignorance.

She watched Tom through the glass door all the morning to see if he read the letter, and betrayed any

emotion at its contents: but Tom went about his business as usual, and, as far as she saw, never read it at all.

However, it was read in due time; for, finding himself in a lonely place that afternoon, Tom pulled it out with an anxious face, and read a letter written in a hasty ill-formed hand, underscored at every fifth word, and plentifully bedecked with notes of exclamation.

"What? my dearest friend, and fortune still frowns upon you? Your father blind and ruined! Ah, that I were there to comfort him for your sake! And ah, that I were anywhere, doing any drudgery, which might prevent my being still a burden to my benefactors. Not that they are unkind; not that they are not angels! I told them at once that you could send me no more money till you reached England, perhaps not then; and they answered that God would send it; that He who had sent me to them would send the means of supporting me; and ever since they have redoubled their kindness: but it is intolerable, this dependence, and on you, too, who have a father to support in his darkness. Oh, how I feel for you! But to tell you the truth, I pay a price for this dependence. I must needs be staid and sober; I must needs dress like any Quakeress; I must not read this book nor that; and my Shelley—taken from me, I suppose, because it spoke too much 'Liberty,' though, of course, the reason given was its infidel opinions—is replaced by 'Law's Serious Call.' 'Tis

all right and good, I doubt not: but it is very dreary; as dreary as these black fir-forests, and brown snake fences, and that dreadful, dreadful Canadian winter which is past, which went to my very heart, day after day, like a sword of ice. Another such winter, and I shall die, as one of my own humming-birds would die, did you cage him here, and prevent him from fleeing home to the sunny South when the first leaves begin to fall. Dear children of the sun! my heart goes forth to them; and the whir of their wings is music to me, for it tells me of the South, the glaring South, with its glorious flowers, and glorious woods, its luxuriance, life, fierce enjoyments—let fierce sorrows come with them, if it must be so! Let me take the evil with the good, and live my rich wild life through bliss and agony, like a true daughter of the sun, instead of crystallising slowly here into ice, amid countenances rigid with respectability, sharpened by the lust of gain; without taste, without emotion, without even sorrow! Let who will be the stagnant mill-head, crawling in its ugly spade-cut ditch to turn the mill. Let me be the wild mountain brook, which foams and flashes over the rocks—what if they tear it?—it leaps them nevertheless, and goes laughing on its way. Let me go thus, for weal or woe! And if I sleep awhile, let it be like the brook, beneath the shade of fragrant magnolias and luxuriant vines, and image, meanwhile, in my bosom nothing but the beauty around.

"Yes, my friend, I can live no longer this dull

chrysalid life, in comparison with which, at times, even that past dark dream seems tolerable—for amid its lurid smoke were flashes of brightness. A slave? Well; I ask myself at times, and what were women meant for but to be slaves? Free them, and they enslave themselves again, or languish unsatisfied; for they must love. And what blame to them if they love a white man, tyrant though he be, rather than a fellow-slave? If the men of our own race will claim us, let them prove themselves worthy of us! Let them rise, exterminate their tyrants, or, failing that, show that they know how to die. Till then, those who are the masters of their bodies will be the masters of our hearts. If they crouch before the white like brutes, what wonder if we look up to him as to a god? Woman must worship, or be wretched. Do I not know it? Have I not had my dream—too beautiful for earth? Was there not one whom you knew, to hear whom call me slave would have been rapture; to whom I would have answered on my knees, Master, I have no will but yours! But that is past—past. One happiness alone was possible for a slave, and even that they tore from me; and now I have no thought, no purpose, save revenge.

"These good people bid me forgive my enemies. Easy enough for them, who have no enemies to forgive. Forgive? Forgive injustice, oppression, baseness, cruelty? Forgive the devil, and bid him go in peace, and work his wicked will? Why have they put into my hands, these last three years, books worthy

of a free nation?—books which call patriotism divine; which tell me how in every age and clime men have been called heroes who rose against their conquerors; women martyrs who stabbed their tyrants, and then died? Hypocrites! Did their grandfathers meekly turn the other cheek when your English taxed them somewhat too heavily? Do they not now teach every school-child to glory in their own revolution, their own declaration of independence, and to flatter themselves into the conceit that they are the lords of creation, and the examples of the world, because they asserted that sacred right of resistance which is discovered to be unchristian in the African? They will free us, forsooth, in good time (is it to be in God's good time, or in their own?) if we will but be patient, and endure the rice-swamp, the scourge, the slave-market, and shame unspeakable, a few years more, till all is ready and safe,—for them. Dreamers as well as hypocrites! What nation was ever freed by others' help? I have been reading history to see,—you do not know how much I have been reading,—and I find that freemen have always freed themselves, as we must do; and as they will never let us do, because they know that with freedom must come retribution; that our Southern tyrants have an account to render, which the cold Northerner has no heart to see him pay. For, after all, he loves the Southerner better than the slave; and fears him more also. What if the Southern aristocrat, who lords it over him as the panther does over the ox, should transfer (as he

has threatened many a time) the cowhide from the negro's loins to his? No; we must free ourselves! And there lives one woman, at least, who, having gained her freedom, knows how to use it in eternal war against all tyrants. Oh, I could go down, I think at moments, down to New Orleans itself, with a brain and lips of fire, and speak words—you know how I could speak them—which would bring me in a week to the scourge, perhaps to the stake. The scourge I could endure. Have I not felt it already? Do I not bear its scars even now, and glory in them; for they were won by speaking as a woman should speak? And even the fire?—Have not women been martyrs already? and could not I be one? Might not my torments madden a people into manhood, and my name become a war-cry in the sacred fight? And yet, oh my friend, life is sweet!—and my little day has been so dark and gloomy!—may I not have one hour's sunshine, ere youth and vigour are gone, and my swift-vanishing Southern womanhood wrinkles itself up into despised old age? Oh, counsel me,—help me, my friend, my preserver, my true master now, so brave, so wise, so all-knowing; under whose mask of cynicism lies hid (have I not cause to know it?) the heart of a hero.

"MARIE."

"If Miss Heale could have watched Tom's face as he read, much more could she have heard his words as he finished, all jealousy would have passed from her mind: for as he read, the cynical smile grew

sharper and sharper, forming a fit prelude for the "Little fool!" which was his only comment.

"I thought you would have fallen in love with some honest farmer years ago: but a martyr you shan't be, even if I have to send for you hither; though how to get you bread to eat I don't know. However, you have been reading your book, it seems, — clever enough you always were, and too clever; so you could go out as governess, or something. Why, here's a postscript dated three months afterwards! Ah, I see; this letter was written last July, in answer to my Australian one. What's the meaning of this?" And he began reading again.

"I wrote so far; but I had not the heart to send it: it was so full of repinings. And since then,— must I tell the truth?—I have made a step; do not call it a desperate one; do not blame me, for your blame I cannot bear: but I have gone on the stage. There was no other means of independence open to me; and I had a dream, I have it still, that there, if anywhere, I might do my work. You told me that I might become a great actress; I have set my heart on becoming one; on learning to move the hearts of men, till the time comes when I can tell them, show them, in living flesh and blood, upon the stage, the secrets of a slave's sorrows, and that slave a woman. The time has not come for that yet here: but I have had my success already, more than I could have expected; and not only in Canada, but in the States.

I have been at New York, acting to crowded houses. Ah, when they applauded me, how I longed to speak! to pour out my whole soul to them, and call upon them, as men, to——. But that will come in time. I have found a friend, who has promised to write dramas especially for me. Merely republican ones at first; in which I can give full vent to my passion, and hurl forth the eternal laws of liberty, which their consciences may—must—at last, apply for themselves. But soon, he says, we shall be able to dare to approach the real subject, if not in America, still in Europe; and then, I trust, the coloured actress will stand forth as the championess of her race, of all who are oppressed, in every capital in Europe, save, alas! Italy and the Austria who crushes her. I have taken, I should tell you, an Italian name. It was better, I thought, to hide my African taint, forsooth, for awhile. So the wise New Yorkers have been fêting, as Maria Cordifiamma, the white woman (for am I not fairer than many an Italian signora?), whom they would have looked upon as an inferior being under the name of Marie Lavington: though there is finer old English blood running in my veins, from your native Berkshire, they say, than in any a Down-Easter's who hangs upon my lips. Address me henceforth, then, as La Signora Maria Cordifiamma. I am learning fast, by the by, to speak Italian. I shall be at Quebec till the end of the month. Then, I believe, I come to London; and we shall meet once more: and I shall

thank you, thank you, thank you, once more, for all your marvellous kindness."

"Humph!" said Tom, after a while. "Well, she is old enough to choose for herself. Five-and-twenty she must be by now. . . . As for the stage, I suppose it is the best place for her; better, at least, than turning governess, and going mad, as she would do, over her drudgery and her dreams. But who is this friend? Singing-master, scribbler, or political refugee? or perhaps all three together? A dark lot, those fellows. I must keep my eye on him; though it's no concern of mine. I've done my duty by the poor thing; the devil himself can't deny that. But, somehow, if this play-writing worthy plays her false, I feel very much as if I should be fool enough to try whether I have forgotten my pistol-shooting."

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FOE WITH A NEW FACE.

"THIS child's head is dreadfully hot; and how yellow he does look!" says Mrs. Vavasour, fussing about in her little nursery. "Oh, Clara, what shall I do? I really dare not give them any more medicine myself; and that horrid old Doctor Heale is worse than no one."

"Ah, ma'am," says Clara, who is privileged to bemoan herself, and to have sad confidences made to her, "if we were but in town now, to see Mr. Chilvers, or any one that could be trusted; but in this dreadful out-of-the-way place——"

"Don't talk of it, Clara! Oh, what will become of the poor children?" And Mrs. Vavasour sits down and cries, as she does three times at least every week.

"But indeed, ma'am, if you thought you could trust him, there is that new assistant——"

"The man who was saved from the wreck? Why, nobody knows who he is."

"Oh, but indeed, ma'am, he is a very nice gentleman, I can say that; and so wonderfully clever; and has cured so many people already, they say, and got

down a lot of new medicines (for he has great friends among the doctors in town), and such a wonderful magnifying glass, with which he showed me himself, as I dropped into the shop promiscuous, such horrible things, ma'am, in a drop of water, that I haven't dared hardly to wash my face since."

"And what good will the magnifying glass do to us?" says the poor little Irish soul, laughing up through its tears. "He won't want it to see how ill poor Frederick is, I'm sure; but you may send for him, Clara."

"I'll go myself, ma'am, and make sure," says Clara; glad enough of a run, and chance of a chat with the young Doctor.

And in half an hour Mr. Thurnall is announced.

Though Mrs. Vavasour has a flannel apron on (for she will wash the children herself, in spite of Elsley's grumblings), Tom sees that she is a lady; and puts on, accordingly, his very best manner, which, as his experience has long since taught him, is no manner at all.

He does his work quietly and kindly, and bows himself out.

"You will be sure to send the medicine immediately, Mr. Thurnall."

"I will bring it myself, madam; and, if you like, administer it. I think the young gentleman has made friends with me sufficiently already."

Tom keeps his word, and is back, and away again to his shop, in a marvellously short space, having "struck a fresh root," as he calls it; for—

"What a very well-behaved sensible man that Mr. Thurnall is," says Lucia to Elsley, an hour after, as she meets him coming in from the garden, where he has been polishing his "Wreck." "I am sure he understands his business; he was so kind and quiet, and yet so ready, and seemed to know all the child's symptoms beforehand, in such a strange way. I do hope he'll stay here. I feel happier about the poor children than I have for a long time."

"Thurnall?" asks Elsley, who is too absorbed in the "Wreck" to ask after the children; but the name catches his ear.

"Mr. Heale's new assistant—the man who was wrecked," answers she, too absorbed, in her turn, in the children to notice her husband's startled face.

"Thurnall? Which Thurnall?"

"Do you know the name? It's not a common one," says she, moving to the door.

"No—not a common one at all! You said the children were not well?"!

"I am glad that you thought of asking after the poor things."

"Why, really, my dear——" But before he can finish his excuse (probably not worth hearing), she has trotted up-stairs again to the nest, and is as busy as ever. Possibly Clara might do the greater part of what she does, and do it better: but still, are they not her children? Let those who will call a mother's care mere animal instinct, and liken it to that of the sparrow or the spider: shall we not rather call it a

Divine inspiration, and doubt whether the sparrow and the spider must not have souls to be saved, if they, too, show forth that faculty of maternal love which is, of all human feelings, most inexplicable and most self-sacrificing; and therefore, surely, most heavenly? If that does not come down straight from heaven, a "good and perfect gift," then what is heaven, and what the gifts which it sends down?

But poor Elsley may have had solid reasons for thinking more of the name of Thurnall than of his children's health: we will hope so for his sake; for, after sundry melodramatic pacings and starts (Elsley was of a melodramatic turn, and fond of a scene, even when he had no spectator, not even a looking-glass;) besides ejaculations of "It cannot be!" "If it were!" "I trust not!" "A fresh ghost to torment me!" "When will come the end of this accursed coil which I have wound round my life?" and so forth, he decided aloud that the suspense was intolerable; and enclosing himself in his poetical cloak and Mazzini wide-awake, strode down to the town, and into the shop. And as he entered it, "his heart sank to his midriff, and his knees below were loosed." For there, making up pills, in a pair of brown holland sleeves of his own manufacture (for Tom was a good seamster, as all travellers should be), whistled Lilliburlero, as of old, the Tom of other days, which Elsley's muse would fain have buried in a thousand Lethes.

Elsley came forward to the counter carelessly, nevertheless, after a moment. "What with my

beard, and the lapse of time," thought he, "he cannot know me." So he spoke,—

"I understand you have been visiting my children, sir. I hope you did not find them seriously indisposed?"

"Mr. Vavasour?" says Tom, with a low bow.

"I am Mr. Vavasour!" But Elsley was a bad actor, and hesitated and coloured so much as he spoke, that if Tom had known nothing, he might have guessed something.

"Nothing serious, I assure you, sir: unless you are come to announce any fresh symptom."

"Oh, no—not at all—that is—I was passing on my way to the quay, and thought it as well to have your own assurance; Mrs. Vavasour is so over-anxious."

"You seem to partake of her infirmity, sir," says Tom, with a smile and a bow. "However, it is one which does you both honour."

An awkward pause.

"I hope I am not taking a liberty, sir; but I think I am bound to——"

"What in heaven is he going to say?" thought Elsley to himself, feeling very much inclined to run away.

"Thank you for all the pleasure and instruction which your writings have given me in lonely hours, and lonely places too. Your first volume of poems has been read by one man, at least, beside wild watch-fires in the Rocky Mountains."

Tom did not say that he pitched the said volume

into the river in disgust; and that it was, probably, long since used up as house material by the caddis-baits of those parts,—for doubtless there are caddises there as elsewhere.

Poor Elsley rose at the bait, and smiled and bowed in silence.

"I have been so long absent from England, and in utterly wild countries, too, that I need hardly be ashamed to ask if you have written anything since 'The Soul's Agonies'? No doubt if you have, I might have found it at Melbourne, on my way home: but my visit there was a very hurried one. However, the loss is mine, and the fault too, as I ought to call it."

"Pray make no excuses," says Elsley, delighted. "I have written, of course. Who can help writing, sir, while Nature is so glorious, and man so wretched? One cannot but take refuge from the pettiness of the real in the contemplation of the ideal. Yes, I have written. I will send you my last book down. I don't know whether you will find me improved."

"How can I doubt that I shall?"

"Saddened, perhaps; perhaps more severe in my taste; but we will not talk of that. I owe you a debt, sir, for having furnished me with one of the most striking 'motifs' I ever had. I mean that miraculous escape of yours. It is seldom enough, in this dull every-day world, one stumbles on such an incident ready made to one's hands, and needing only to be described as one sees it."

And the weak, vain man chatted on, and ended by telling Tom all about his poem of "The Wreck," in a tone which seemed to imply that he had done Tom a serious favour, perhaps raised him to immortality, by putting him in a book.

Tom thanked him gravely for the said honour, bowed him at last out of the shop, and then vaulted back clean over the counter, as soon as Elsley was out of sight, and commenced an Indian war-dance of frantic character, accompanying himself by an extemporary chaunt, with which the name of John Briggs was frequently intermingled;—

> "If I don't know you, Johnny, my boy,
> In spite of all your beard;
> Why then I am a slower fellow,
> Than ever has yet appeared.

"Oh if it was but he! what a card for me! What a world it is for poor honest rascals like me to try a fall with!—

> "Why didn't I take bad verse to make,
> And call it poetry;
> And so make up to an earl's daughter,
> Which was of high degree?

But perhaps I am wrong after all: no—I saw he knew me, the humbug; though he never was a humbug, never rose above the rank of fool. However, I'll make assurance doubly sure, and then,—if it pays me not to tell him I know him, I won't tell him; and if it pays me to tell him, I will tell him. Just as you choose, my good Mr. Poet." And Tom re-

turned to his work, singing an extempore parody of "We met, 'twas in a crowd," ending with—

"And thou art the cause of this anguish, my pill-box,"

in a howl so doleful, that Mrs. Heale marched into the shop, evidently making up her mind for an explosion.

"I am very sorry, sir, to have to speak to you upon such a subject, but I must say, that the profane songs, sir, which our house is not at all accustomed to them; not to mention that at your time of life, and in your position, sir, as my husband's assistant, though there's no saying (with a meaning toss of the head) how long it may last,"—and there, her grammar having got into a hopeless knot, she stopped.

Tom looked at her cheerfully and fixedly. "I had been expecting this," said he to himself. "Better show the old cat at once that I carry claws as well as she."

"There *is* saying, madam, humbly begging your pardon, how long my present engagement will last. It will last just as long as I like."

Mrs. Heale boiled over with rage: but ere the geyser could explode, Tom had continued in that dogged, nasal Yankee twang which he assumed when he was venomous:

"As for the songs, ma'am, there are two ways of making oneself happy in this life; you can judge for yourself which is best. One is to do one's work like a man, and hum a tune, to keep one's spirits up; the other is to let the work go to rack and ruin, and keep

one's spirits up, if one is a gentleman, by a little too much brandy;—if one is a lady, by a little too much laudanum."

"Laudanum, sir?" almost screamed Mrs. Heale, turning pale as death.

"The pint bottle of best laudanum, which I had from town a fortnight ago, ma'am, is now nearly empty, ma'am. I will make affidavit that I have not used a hundred drops, or drunk one. I suppose it was the cat. Cats have queer tastes in the west, I believe. I have heard the cat coming down stairs into the surgery, once or twice after I was in bed; so I set my door ajar a little, and saw her come up again: but whether she had a vial in her paws——"

"Oh, sir!" says Mrs. Heale, bursting into tears. "And after the dreadful toothache which I have had this fortnight, which nothing but a little laudanum would ease it; and at my time of life, to mock a poor elderly lady's infirmities, which I did not look for this cruelty and outrage!"

"Dry your tears, my dear madam," says Tom, in his most winning tone. "You will always find me the thorough gentleman, I am sure. If I had not been one, it would have been easy enough for me, with my powerful London connections,—though I won't boast,—to set up in opposition to your good husband, instead of saving him labour in his good old age. Only, my dear madam, how shall I get the laudanum-bottle refilled without the doctor's—you understand?"

The wretched old woman hurried upstairs, and brought him down a half-sovereign out of her private hoard, trembling like an aspen leaf, and departed.

"So—scotched, but not killed. You'll gossip and lie too. Never trust a laudanum-drinker. You'll see me, by the eye of imagination, committing all the seven deadly sins; and by the tongue of inspiration go forth and proclaim the same at the town-head. I can't kill you, and I can't cure you, so I must endure you. What said old Goethe, in all the German I ever cared to recollect:—

> " ' Der Wallfisch hat doch seine Laus;
> Muss auch die meine haben.'

"Now, then, for Mrs. Penberthy's draughts. I wonder how that pretty schoolmistress goes on. If she were but honest, now, and had fifty thousand pounds—why then, she wouldn't marry me; and so why now, I wouldn't marry she,—as my native Berkshire grammar would render it."

CHAPTER VII.

LA CORDIFIAMMA.

THIS chapter shall begin, good reader, with one of those startling bursts of "illustration," with which our most popular preachers are wont now to astonish and edify their hearers, and after starting with them at the opening of the sermon from the north-pole, the Crystal Palace, or the nearest cabbage-garden, float them safe, upon the gushing stream of oratory, to the safe and well-known shores of doctrinal commonplace, lost in admiration at the skill of the good man who can thus make all roads lead, if not to heaven, at least to strong language about its opposite. True, the logical sequence of their periods may be, like that of the coming one, somewhat questionable, reminding one at moments of Fluellen's comparison between Macedon and Monmouth, Henry the Fifth and Alexander: but, in the logic of the pulpit, all's well that ends well, and the end must needs sanctify the means. There is, of course, some connection or other between all things in heaven and earth, or how would the universe hold together? And if one has not time to find out the true connection, what is left but to invent the best

one can for oneself? Thus argues, probably, the popular preacher, and fills his pews, proving thereby clearly the excellence of his method. So argue also, probably, the popular poets, to whose "luxuriant fancy" everything suggests anything, and thought plays leap-frog with thought down one page and up the next, till one fancies at moments that they had got permission from the higher powers, before looking at the universe, to stir it all up a few times with a spoon. It is notorious, of course, that poets and preachers alike pride themselves upon this method of astonishing; that the former call it, "seeing the infinite in the finite;" the latter—"pressing secular matters into the service of the sanctuary," and other pretty phrases which, for reverence' sake, shall be omitted. No doubt they have their reasons and their reward. The style takes; the style pays; and what more would you have? Let them go on rejoicing, in spite of the cynical pedants in the Saturday Review, who dare to accuse (will it be believed?) these luminaries of the age of talking merely irreverent nonsense. Meanwhile, so evident is the success (sole test of merit) which has attended the new method, that it is worth while trying whether it will not be as taking in the novel as it is in the chapel; and therefore the reader is requested to pay special attention to the following paragraph, modelled carefully after the exordiums of a famous Irish preacher, now drawing crowded houses at the West End of Town. As thus;—"It is the pleasant month of May, when, as in old Chaucer's time, the—

"Smale foules maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye
So priketh hem nature in their corages.
Then longen folk to goe on pilgrimages,
And specially from every shire's end
Of Englelond, to Exeter-hall they wend,"

till the low places of the Strand blossom with white cravats, those lilies of the valley, types of meekness and humility, at least in the pious palmer—and why not of similar virtues in the undertaker, the concert-singer, the groom, the tavern-waiter, the croupier at the gaming-table, and Frederick Augustus Lord Scoutbush, who, white-cravated like the rest, is just getting into his cab at the door of the Never-mind-what Theatre, to spend an hour at Kensington before sauntering in to Lady M——'s ball?

Why not, I ask, at least in the case of little Scoutbush? For Guardsman though he be, coming from a theatre and going to a ball, there is meekness and humility in him at this moment, as well as in the average of the white-cravated gentlemen who trotted along that same pavement about eleven o'clock this forenoon. Why should not his white cravat, like theirs, be held symbolic of that fact? However, Scoutbush belongs rather to the former than the latter of Chaucer's categories; for a "smale foule" he is, a little bird-like fellow, who maketh melodie also, and warbles like a cock-robin; we cannot liken him to any more dignified songster. Moreover, he will sleep all night with open eye; for he will not be in bed till five to-morrow morning; and pricked he is, and that

sorely, in his courage; for he is as much in love as his little nature can be, with the new actress, La Signora Cordifiamma, of the Never-mind-what Theatre.

How exquisitely, now (for this is one of the rare occasions in which a man is permitted to praise himself), is established hereby an unexpected bond of linked sweetness long drawn out between things which had, ere they came beneath the magic touch of genius, no more to do with each other than this book has with the Stock Exchange. Who would have dreamed of travelling from the Tabard in Southwark to the last new singer, *viâ* Exeter-hall and the lilies of the valley, and touching en passant on to cardinal virtues and an Irish Viscount? But see; given only a little impudence, and less logic, and hey presto! the thing is done; and all that remains to be done is to dilate (as the Rev. Dionysius O'Blareaway would do at this stage of the process) upon the moral question which has been so cunningly raised, and to inquire, firstly,—how the virtues of meekness and humility could be predicated of Frederick Augustus St. Just, Viscount Scoutbush and Baron Torytown, in the peerage of Ireland; and secondly,—how those virtues were called into special action by his questionably wise attachment to a new actress, to whom he had never spoken a word in his life.

First, then, "Little Freddy Scoutbush," as his compeers irreverently termed him, was, by common consent of her Majesty's Guards, a "good fellow." Whether the St. James' Street definition of that

adjective be the perfect one or not, we will not stay to inquire; but in the Guards' club-house it meant this: that Scoutbush had not an enemy in the world, because he deserved none; that he lent, and borrowed not; gave, and asked not again; envied not; hustled not; slandered not; never bore malice, never said a cruel word, never played a dirty trick, would hear a fellow's troubles out to the end, and if he could not counsel, at least would not laugh at them, and at all times and in all places lived and let live, and was accordingly a general favourite. His morality was neither better nor worse than the average of his companions; but if he was sensual, he was at least not base; and there were frail women who blessed "little Freddy," and his shy and secret generosity, from having saved them from the lowest pit.

Au reste, he was idle, frivolous, useless; but with these two palliating facts, that he knew it and regretted it; and that he never had a chance of being aught else. His father and mother had died when he was a child. He had been sent to Eton at seven, where he learnt nothing, and into the Guards at seventeen, where he learnt less than nothing. His aunt, old Lady Knockdown, who was a kind old Irish woman, an ex-blue and ex-beauty, now a high Evangelical professor, but as worldly as her neighbours in practice, had tried to make him a good boy in old times: but she had given him up, long before he left Eton, as a "vessel of wrath" (which he certainly was, with his hot Irish temper); and since then she had

only spoken of him with moans, and to him just as if he and she had made a compact to be as worldly as they could, and as if the fact that he was going, as she used to tell her private friends, straight to the wrong place, was to be utterly ignored before the pressing reality of getting him and his sisters well married. And so it befell, that Lady Knockdown, like many more, having begun with too high (or at least precise) a spiritual standard, was forced to end practically in having no standard at all; and that for ten years of Scoutbush's life, neither she nor any other human being had spoken to him as if he had a soul to be saved, or any duty on earth save to eat, drink, and be merry.

And all the while there was a quaint and pathetic consciousness in the little man's heart that he was meant for something better; that he was no fool, and was not intended to be one. He would thrust his head into lectures at the Polytechnic and the British Institution, with a dim endeavour to guess what they were all about, and a good-natured envy of the clever fellows who knew about "science, and all that." He would sit and listen, puzzled and admiring, to the talk of statesmen, and confide his woe afterwards to some chum.—"Ah, if I had had the chance now that my cousin Chalkclere has! If I had had two or three tutors, and a good mother, too, keeping me in a coop, and cramming me with learning, as they cram chickens for the market, I fancy I could have shown my comb and hackles in the House as well as some of them.

I fancy I could make a speech in parliament now, with the help of a little Irish impudence, if I only knew anything to speak about."

So Scoutbush clung, in a childish way, to any superior man who would take notice of him, and not treat him as the fribble which he seemed. He had taken to that well-known artist, Claude Mellot, of late, simply from admiration of his brilliant talk about art and poetry; and boldly confessed that he preferred one of Mellot's orations on the sublime and beautiful, though he didn't understand a word of them, to the songs and jokes (very excellent ones in their way) of Mr. Hector Harkaway, the distinguished Irish novelist, and boon companion of her Majesty's Life Guards Green. His special intimate and Mentor, however, was a certain Major Campbell, of whom more hereafter; who, however, being a lofty-minded and perhaps somewhat Pharisaic person, made heavier demands on Scoutbush's conscience than he had yet been able to meet; for fully as he agreed that Hercules' choice between pleasure and virtue was the right one, still he could not yet follow that ancient hero along the thorny path, and confined his conception of "duty" to the minimum guard and drill. He had estates in Ireland, which had almost cleared themselves during his long minority, but which, since the famine, had cost him about as much as they brought him in; and estates in the West, which, with a Welsh slate-quarry, brought him in some seven or eight thousand a-year; and so kept his poor little head above water, to look

pitifully round the universe, longing for the life of him to make out what it all meant, and hoping that somebody would come and tell him.

So much for his meekness and humility in general; as for the particular display of those virtues which he has shown to-day, it must be understood that he has given a promise to Mrs. Mellot not to make love to La Cordifiamma; and, on that only condition, has been allowed to meet her to-night at one of Claude Mellot's petits soupers.

La Cordifiamma has been staying, ever since she came to England, with the Mellots in the wilds of Brompton; unapproachable there, as in all other places. In public, she is a very Zenobia, who keeps all animals of the other sex at an awful distance; and of the fifty young puppies who are raving about her beauty, her air, and her voice, not one has obtained an introduction; while Claude, whose studio used to be a favourite lounge of young Guardsmen, has, as civilly as he can, closed his doors to those magnificent personages ever since the new singer became his guest.

Claude Mellot seems to have come into a fortune of late years, large enough, at least, for his few wants. He paints no longer, save when he chooses; and has taken a little old house in one of those back lanes of Brompton, where islands of primæval nursery garden still remain undevoured by the advancing surges of the brick and mortar deluge. There he lives, happy in a green lawn, and windows opening thereon; in

three elms, a cork, an ilex, and a mulberry, with a great standard pear, for flower and foliage the queen of all suburban trees. There he lies on the lawn, upon strange skins, the summer's day, playing with cats and dogs, and making love to his Sabina, who has not lost her beauty in the least, though she is on the wrong side of five-and-thirty. He deludes himself, too, into the belief that he is doing something, because he is writing a treatise on the "Principles of Beauty;" which will be published, probably, about the time the Thames is purified, in the season of Latter Lammas and the Greek Kalends; and the more certainly so, because he has wandered into the abyss of conic sections and curves of double curvature, of which, if the truth must be spoken, he knows no more than his friends of the Life Guards Green.

To this charming little nest has Lord Scoutbush procured an evening's admission after abject supplication to Sabina, who pets him because he is musical, and solemn promises neither to talk or look any manner of foolishness.

"My dearest Mrs. Mellot," says the poor wretch, "I will be good, indeed I will; I will not even speak to her. Only let me sit and look,—and—and—why, I thought you understood all about such things, and could pity a poor fellow who was spoony."

And Sabina, who prides herself much on understanding such things, and on having, indeed, reduced them to a science in which she gives gratuitous lessons to all young gentlemen and ladies of her

acquaintance, receives him pityingly, in that delicious little back drawing-room, whither whosoever enters is in no hurry to go out again.

Claude's house is arranged with his usual defiance of all conventionalities. Dining or drawing-room proper there is none; the large front room is the studio, where he and Sabina eat and drink, as well as work and paint · but out of it opens a little room, the walls of which are so covered with gems of art (where the rogue finds money to buy them is a puzzle), that the eye can turn nowhere without taking in some new beauty, and wandering on from picture to statue, from portrait to landscape, dreaming and learning afresh after every glance. At the back, a glass bay has been thrown out, and forms a little conservatory, for ever fresh and gay with tropic ferns and flowers; gaudy orchids dangle from the roof, creepers hide the framework, and you hardly see where the room ends, and the winter-garden begins; and in the centre an ottoman invites you to lounge. It costs Claude money, doubtless; but he has his excuse,—"Having once seen the tropics, I cannot live without some love-tokens from their lost paradises; and which is the wiser plan, to spend money on a horse and brougham, which we don't care to use, and on scrambling into society at the price of one great stupid party a year, or to make our little world as pretty as we can, and let those who wish to see us, take us as they find us?"

In this "nest," as Claude and Sabina call it, sacred

to the everlasting billing and cooing of that sweet little pair of human love-birds who have built it, was supper set. La Cordifiamma, all the more beautiful from the languor produced by the excitement of acting, lay upon a sofa; Claude attended, talking earnestly; Sabina, according to her custom, was fluttering in and out, and arranging supper with her own hands; both husband and wife were as busy as bees; and yet any one accustomed to watch the little ins and outs of married life, could have seen that neither forgot for a moment that the other was in the room, but basked and purred, like two blissful cats, each in the sunshine of the other's presence; and he could have seen, too, that La Cordifiamma was divining their thoughts, and studying all their little expressions, perhaps that she might use them on the stage; perhaps, too, happy in sympathy with their happiness: and yet there was a shade of sadness on her forehead.

Scoutbush enters, is introduced, and receives a salutation from the actress haughty and cold enough to check the forwardest; puts on the air of languid nonchalance which is considered (or was before the little experiences of the Crimea) fit and proper for young gentlemen of rank and fashion. So he sits down, and feasts his foolish eyes upon his idol, hoping for a few words before the evening is over. Did I not say well, then, that there was as much meekness and humility under Scoutbush's white cravat as under others? But his little joy is soon dashed; for the black boy announces (seemingly much to his own

pleasure) a tall personage, whom, from his dress and his moustachio, Scoutbush takes for a Frenchman, till he hears him called Stangrave. The intruder is introduced to Lord Scoutbush, which ceremony is consummated by a microscopic nod on either side; he then walks straight up to La Cordifiamma; and Scoutbush sees her cheeks flush as he does so. He takes her hand, speaks to her in a low voice, and sits down by her, Claude making room for him; and the two engage earnestly in conversation.

Scoutbush is much inclined to walk out of the room;—was he brought there to see that? Of course, however, he sits still, keeps his own counsel, and makes himself agreeable enough all the evening, like a good-natured kind-hearted little man, as he is. Whereby he is repaid; for the conversation soon becomes deep, and even too deep for him; and he is fain to drop out of the race, and leave it to his idol and to the new-comer, who seems to have seen, and done, and read everything in heaven and earth, and probably bought everything also; not to mention that he would be happy to sell the said universe again, at a very cheap price, if any one would kindly take it off his hands. Not that he boasts, or takes any undue share of the conversation; he is evidently too well bred for that; but every sentence shows an acquaintance with facts of which Eton has told Scoutbush nothing, the barrack-room less, and after which he still craves, the good little fellow, in a very honest way, and would soon have learnt, had he had a

chance; for of native Irish smartness he had no lack.

"Poor Flake was half mad about you, Signora, in the stage-box to-night," said Sabina. "He says that he shall not sleep till he has painted you."

"Do let him!" cried Scoutbush: "what a picture he will make!"

"He may paint a picture, but not me; it is quite enough, Lord Scoutbush, to be some one else for two hours every night, without going down to posterity, as some one else for ever. If I am painted, I will be painted by no one who cannot represent my very self."

"You are right!" said Stangrave: "and you will do the man himself good by refusing; he has some notion still of what a portrait ought to be. If he once begins by attempting passing expressions of passion, which is all stage portraits can give, he will find them so much easier than honest representations of character, that he will end, where all our moderns seem to do, in merest melodrama."

"Explain!" said she.

"Portrait painters now depend for their effect on the mere accidents of the *entourage;* on dress, on landscape, even on broad hints of a man's occupation, putting a plan on the engineer's table, and a roll in the statesman's hands, like the old Greek who wrote 'this is an ox' under his picture. If they wish to give the face expression, though they seldom aim so high, all they can compass is a passing emotion; and

one sitter goes down to posterity with an eternal frown, another with an eternal smile."

"Or, if he be a poet," said Sabina, "rolls his eye for ever in a fine frenzy."

"But would you forbid them to paint passion?"

"Not in its place; when the picture gives the causes of the passion, and the scene tells its own story. But then let us not have merely Kean as Hamlet, but Hamlet's self; let the painter sit down and conceive for himself a Hamlet, such as Shakspeare conceived; not merely give us as much of him as could be pressed at a given moment into the face of Mr. Kean. He will be only unjust to both actor and character. If Flake paints Marie as Lady Macbeth, he will give us neither her nor Lady Macbeth; but only the single point at which their two characters can coincide."

"How rude!" said Sabina, laughing; "what is he doing but hinting that La Signora's conception of Lady Macbeth is a very partial and imperfect one?"

"And why should it not be?" asked the actress, humbly enough.

"I meant," he answered warmly, "that there was more, far more in her than in any character which she assumes; and I do not want a painter to copy only one aspect, and let a part go down to posterity as a representation of the whole."

"If you mean that, you shall be forgiven. No; when she is painted, she shall be painted as herself, as she is now. Claude shall paint her."

"I have not known La Signora long enough," said Claude, "to aspire to such an honour. I paint no face which I have not studied for a year."

"Faith!" said Scoutbush, "you would find no more in most faces at the year's end, than you did the first day."

"Then I would not paint them. If I paint a portrait, which I seldom do, I wish to make it such a one as the old masters aimed at,—to give the sum total of the whole character; traces of every emotion, if it were possible, and glances of every expression which have passed over it since it was born into the world. They are all here, the whole past and future of the man; and every man, as the Mohammedans say, carries his destiny on his forehead."

"But who has eyes to see it?"

"The old masters had; some of them at least. Raphael had; Sebastian del Piombo had; and Titian, and Giorgione. There are portraits painted by them which carry a whole life-history concentrated into one moment."

"But they," said Stangrave, "are the portraits of men such as they saw around them; natures who were strong for good and evil, who were not ashamed to show their strength. Where will a painter find such among the poor, thin, unable mortals who come to him to buy immortality at a hundred and fifty guineas apiece, after having spent their lives in religiously rubbing off their angles against each other, and forming their characters, as you form shot, by

shaking them together in a bag till they have polished each other into dullest uniformity?"

"It's very true," said Scoutbush, who suffered much at times from a certain wild Irish vein, which stirred him up to kick over the traces. "People are horribly like each other; and if a poor fellow is bored, and tries to do anything spicy or original, he has half-a-dozen people pooh-poohing him down on the score of bad taste."

"Men can be just as original now as ever," said La Signora, "if they had but the courage, even the insight. Heroic souls in old times had no more opportunities than we have: but they used them. There were daring deeds to be done then—are there none now? Sacrifices to be made—are there none now? Wrongs to be redressed—are there none now? Let any one set his heart, in these days, to do what is right, and nothing else; and it will not be long ere his brow is stamped with all that goes to make up the heroical expression — with noble indignation, noble self-restraint, great hopes, great sorrows; perhaps, even, with the print of the martyr's crown of thorns."

She looked at Stangrave as she spoke, with an expression which Scoutbush tried in vain to read. The American made no answer, and seemed to hang his head awhile. After a minute he said tenderly:—

"You will tire yourself if you talk thus, after the evening's fatigue. Mrs. Mellot will sing to us, and give us leisure to think over our lesson."

And Sabina sang; and then Lord Scoutbush was made to sing; and sang his best, no doubt.

So the evening slipt on, till it was past eleven o'clock, and Stangrave rose. "And now," said he, "I must go to Lady M——'s ball; and Marie must rest."

As he went, he just leaned over La Cordifiamma.

"Shall I come in to-morrow morning? We ought to read over that scene together before the rehearsal."

"Early then, or Sabina will be gone out; and she must play soubrette to our hero and heroine."

"You will rest? Mrs. Mellot, you will see that she does not sit up."

"It is not very polite to rob us of her, as soon as you cannot enjoy her yourself."

"I must take care of people who do not take care of themselves;" and Stangrave departed.

Great was Scoutbush's wrath when he saw Marie rise and obey orders. "Who was this man? what right had he to command her?"

He asked as much of Sabina the moment La Cordifiamma had retired.

"Are you not going to Lady M——'s, too?"

"No; that is, I won't go yet; not till you have explained all this to me."

"Explained what?" asked Sabina, looking as demure as a little brown mouse.

"Why, what did you ask me here for?"

"Lord Scoutbush should recollect that he asked himself."

"You cruel venomous creature! do you think I would have come, if I had known that I was to see another man making love to her before my very eyes? I could kill the fellow;—who is he?"

"A New York merchant, unworthy of your aristocratic powder and ball."

"The confounded Yankee!" muttered Scoutbush.

"If people swear in my house, I fine them a dozen of kid gloves. Did you not promise me that you would not make love to her yourself?"

"Well—but, it is too cruel of you, before my very eyes."

"I saw no love-making to-night."

"None? Were you blind?"

"Not in the least; but you cannot well see a thing making which has been made long ago."

"What! Is he her husband?"

"No."

"Engaged to her?"

"No."

"What then!"

"Don't you know already that this is a house of mystery, full of mysterious people? I tell you this only, that if she ever marries any one, she will marry him; and that if I can, I will make her."

"Then you are my enemy after all."

"I! Do you think that Sabina Mellot can see a young viscount loose upon the universe, without trying to make up a match for him? No; I have such a prize for you,—young, handsome, better educated than

any woman whom you will meet to-night. True, she is a Manchester girl: but then she has eighty thousand pounds."

"Eighty thousand nonsense? I'd sooner have that divine creature without a penny, than——"

"And would my lord viscount so far debase himself as to marry an actress?"

"Humph! Faith, my grandmother was an actress; and we St. Justs are none the worse for that fact, as far as I can see,—and certainly none the uglier—the women at least. Oh Sabina—Mrs. Mellot, I mean—only help me this once!"

"This once? Do you intend to marry by my assistance this time, and by your own the next? How many viscountesses are there to be?"

"Don't laugh at me, you cruel woman: you don't know; you fancy that I am not in love——" and the poor fellow began pouring out these commonplaces, which one has heard too often to take the trouble of repeating, and yet which are real enough, and pathetic too; for in every man, however frivolous, or even worthless, love calls up to the surface the real heroism, the real depth of character—all the more deep because common to poet and philosopher, guardsman and country clod.

"I'll leave town to-morrow. I'll go to the Land's-end,—to Norway,—to Africa——"

"And forget her in the bliss of lion-hunting."

"Don't, I tell you; here I will not stay to be driven mad. To think that she is here, and that hateful Yankee at her elbow. I'll go——"

"To Lady M——'s ball?"

"No, confound it; to meet that fellow there! I should quarrel with him, as sure as there is hot Irish blood in my veins. The self-satisfied puppy! to be flirting and strutting there, while such a creature as that is lying thinking of him."

"Would you have him shut himself up in his hotel, and write poetry; or walk the streets all night, sighing at the moon?"

"No; but the cool way in which he went off himself, and sent her to bed. Confound him! commanding her. It made my blood boil."

"Claude, get Lord Scouthush some iced soda-water."

"If you laugh at me, I'll never speak to you again."

"Or buy any of Claude's pictures?"

"Why do you torment me so? I'll go, I say,—leave town to-morrow,—only I can't with this horrid depôt work! What shall I do? It's too cruel of you, while Campbell is away in Ireland, too; and I have not a soul but you to ask advice of, for Valencia is as great a goose as I am;" and the poor little fellow buried his hands in his curls, and stared fiercely into the fire, as if to draw from thence omens of his love, by the spodomantic augury of the ancient Greeks; while Sabina tripped up and down the room, putting things to rights for the night, and enjoying his torments as a cat does those of the mouse between her paws; and yet not out of spite, but from pure and simple fun.

Sabina is one of those charming bodies who knows everybody's business, and manages it. She lives in a world of intrigue, but without a thought of intriguing for her own benefit. She has always a match to make, a disconsolate lover to comfort, a young artist to bring forward, a refugee to conceal, a spendthrift to get out of a scrape; and, like David in the mountains, "every one that is discontented, and every one that is in debt, gather themselves to her." The strangest people, on the strangest errands, run over each other in that cosy little nest of hers. Fine ladies with over-full hearts, and seedy gentlemen with over-empty pockets, jostle each other at her door; and she has a smile, and a repartee, and good, cunning, practical wisdom for each and every one of them, and then dismisses them to bill and coo with Claude, and laugh over everybody and everything. The only price which she demands for her services is, to be allowed to laugh; and if that be permitted, she will be as busy, and earnest, and tender, as Saint Elizabeth herself. "I have no children of my own," she says, "so I just make everybody my children, Claude included; and play with them, and laugh at them, and pet them, and help them out of their scrapes, just as I should if they were in my own nursery." And so it befalls that she is every one's confidant; and though every one seems on the point of taking liberties with her, yet no one does: partly because they are in her power, and partly because, like an Eastern sultana, she carries a poniard, and can use it, though only in

self-defence. So if great people, or small people either (who can give themselves airs as well as their betters), take her plain speaking unkindly, she just speaks a little more plainly, once for all, and goes off smiling to some one else; as a hummingbird, if a flower has no honey in it, whirs away, with a saucy flirt of its pretty little tail, to the next branch on the bush.

"I must know more of this American," said Scoutbush, at last.

"Well, he would be very improving company for you; and I know you like improving company."

"I mean—what has he to do with her?"

"That is just what I will not tell you. One thing I will tell you, though, for it may help to quench any vain hopes on your part; and that is, the reason which she gives for not marrying him."

"Well?"

"Because he is an idler."

"What would she say of me, then?" groaned Scoutbush.

"Very true; for, you must understand, this Mr. Stangrave is not what you or I should call an idle man. He has travelled over half the world and made the best use of his eyes. He has filled his house in New York, they say, with gems of art gathered from every country in Europe. He is a finished scholar; talks half-a-dozen different languages, sings, draws, writes poetry, reads hard every day, at every subject, from gardening to German metaphysics—altogether,

one of the most highly cultivated men I know, and quite an Admirable Crichton in his way."

"Then why does she call him an idler?"

"Because, she says, he has no great purpose in life. She will marry no one who will not devote himself, and all he has, to some great, chivalrous, heroic enterprise; whose one object is to be of use, even if he has to sacrifice his life to it. She says that there must be such men still left in the world; and that if she finds one, him she will marry, and no one else."

"Why, there are none such to be found now-a-days, I thought?"

"You heard what she herself said on that very point."

There was a silence for a minute or two. Scoutbush had heard, and was pondering it in his heart. At last,—

"I am not cut out for a hero; so I suppose I must give her up. But I wish sometimes I could be of use, Mrs. Mellot: but what can a fellow do?"

"I thought there was an Irish tenantry to be looked after, my lord, and a Cornish tenantry too."

"That's what Campbell is always saying: but what more can I do than I do? As for those poor Paddies, I never ask them for rent; if I did, I should not get it; so there is no generosity in that. And as for the Aberalva people, they have got on very well without me for twenty years; and I don't know them, nor what they want; nor even if they do want anything,

except fish enough, and I can't put more fish into the sea, Mrs. Mellot?"

"Try and be a good soldier, then," said she, laughing. "Why should not Lord Scoutbush emulate his illustrious countryman, conquer at a second Waterloo, and die a duke?"

"I'm not cut out for a general, I am afraid; but if—I don't say if I could marry that woman—I suppose it would be a foolish thing—though I shall break my heart, I believe, if I do not. Oh, Mrs. Mellot, you cannot tell what a fool I have made myself about her; and I cannot help it! It's not her beauty merely; but there is something so noble in her face, like one of those Greek goddesses Claude talks of; and when she is acting, if she has to say anything grand, or generous—or—you know the sort of thing,—she brings it out with such a voice, and such a look, from the very bottom of her heart,—it makes me shudder; just as she did when she told that Yankee, that every one could be a hero, or a martyr, if he chose. Mrs. Mellot, I am sure she is one, or she could not look and speak as she does."

"She is one!" said Sabina; "a heroine, and a martyr too."

"If I could,—that was what I was going to say,—if I could but win that woman's respect—as I live, I ask no more; only to be sure she didn't despise me. I'd do—I don't know what I wouldn't do. I'd—I'd study the art of war: I know there are books about it. I'd get out to the East, away from this depôt

work; and if there is no fighting there, as every one says there will not be, I'd go into a marching regiment, and see service. I'd,—hang it, if they'd have me,—I'd even go to the senior department at Sandhurst, and read mathematics!"

Sabina kept her countenance (though with difficulty) at this magnificent bathos; for she saw that the little man was really in earnest; and that the looks and words of the strange actress had awakened in him something far deeper and nobler than the mere sensual passion of a boy.

"Ah, if I had but gone out to Varna with the rest! I thought myself a lucky fellow to be left here."

"Do you know that it is getting very late?"

So Frederick Lord Scoutbush went home to his rooms: and there sat for three hours and more with his feet on the fender, rejecting the entreaties of Mr. Bowie, his servent, either to have something, or to go to bed; yea, he forgot even to smoke, by which Mr. Bowie "jaloused" that he was hit very hard indeed: but made no remark, being a Scotchman, and of a cautious temperament.

However, from that night Scoutbush was a changed man, and tried to be so. He read of nothing but sieges and stockades, brigade evolutions, and conical bullets; he drilled his men till he was an abomination in their eyes, and a weariness to their flesh; only every evening he went to the theatre, watched La Cordifiamma with a heavy heart, and then went home to bed; for the little man had good sense enough to ask Sabina

for no more interviews with her. So in all things he acquitted himself as a model officer, and excited the admiration and respect of Serjeant Major MacArthur, who began fishing at Bowie to discover the cause of this strange metamorphosis in the rackety little Irishman.

"Your master seems to be qualifying himself for the adjutant's post, Mr. Bowie. I'm jalousing he's fired with martial ardour since the war broke out."

To which Bowie, being a brother Scot, answered Scotticè, by a crafty paralogism.

"I've always held it as my opeeeenion, that his lordship is a youth of very good parts, if he was only compelled to employ them."

CHAPTER VIII.

TAKING ROOT.

WHOSOEVER enjoys the sight of an honest man doing his work well, would have enjoyed the sight of Tom Thurnall for the next two months. In-doors all the morning, and out of doors all the afternoon, was that shrewd and good-natured visage, calling up an answering smile on every face, and leaving every heart a little lighter than he found it. Puzzling enough it was, alike to Heale and to Headley, how Tom contrived, as if by magic, to gain every one's good word —their own included. For Frank, in spite of Tom's questionable opinions, had already made all but a confidant of the Doctor; and Heale, in spite of envy and suspicion, could not deny that the young man was a very valuable young man, if he wasn't given so much to those new-fangled notions of the profession.

By which term Heale indicated the, to him, astounding fact, that Tom charged the patients as little, instead of as much as possible, and applying to medicine the principles of an enlightened political economy, tried to increase the demand by cheapening the supply.

"Which is revolutionary doctrine, sir," said Heale to Lieutenant Jones, over the brandy-and-water, "and just like what the Cobden and Bright lot used to talk, and have been the ruin of British agriculture, though don't say I said so, because of my Lord Minchampstead. But, conceive my feelings, sir, as the father of a family, who have my bread to earn, this very morning.—In comes old Dame Penaluna (which is good pay I know, and has two hundred and more out on a merchant brig) for something; and what was my feelings, sir, to hear this young party deliver himself—'Well, ma'am,' says he, as I am a living man, 'I can cure you, if you like, with a dozen bottles of lotion, at eighteenpence a-piece; but if you'll take my advice, you'll buy two pennyworth of alum down street, do what I tell you with it, and cure yourself.' 'It's robbery, sir, I say, all these out-of-the-way cheap dodges, which arn't in the pharmacopœia, half of them; it's unprofessional, sir—quackery."

"Tell you what, Doctor, robbery or none, I'll go to him to-morrow, d'ye see, if I live as long, for this old ailment of mine. I never told you of it, old pill and potion, for fear of a swinging bill: but just grinned and bore it, d'ye see."

"There it is again," cries Heale in despair. "He'll ruin me."

"No, he won't, and you know it."

"What d'ye think he served me last week? A young chap comes in, consumptive, he said, and I dare say he's right—he is uncommonly 'cute about

what he calls diagnosis. Says he, 'You ought to try Carrageen moss. It's an old drug, but it's a good one.' There was a drawer full of it to his hand; had been lying there any time this ten years: I go to open it; but what was my feelings when he goes on, as cool as a cucumber—'And there's bushels of it here,' says he, 'on every rock; so if you'll come down with me at low tide this afternoon, I'll show you the trade, and tell you how to boil it.' I thought I should have knocked him down."

"But you didn't," said Jones, laughing in every muscle of his body. "Tell you what, Doctor, you've got a treasure; he's just getting back your custom, d'ye see, and when he's done that, he'll lay on the bills sharp enough. Why, I hear he's up at Mrs. Vavasour's every day."

"And not ten shillings' worth of medicine sent up to the house any week."

"He charges for his visits, I suppose."

"Not he! If you'll believe me, when I asked him if he wasn't going to, he says, says he, that Mrs. Vavasour's company was quite payment enough for him."

"Shows his good taste. Why, what now, Mary?" as the maid opens the door.

"Mr. Thurnall wants Mr. Heale."

"Always wanting me," groans Heale, hugging his glass, "driving me about like any negro slave. Tell him to come in."

"Here, Doctor," says the Lieutenant, "I want you

to prescribe for me, if you'll do it gratis, d'ye see. Take some brandy and water."

"Good advice costs nothing," says Tom, filling; "Mr. Heale, read that letter."

And the Lieutenant details his ailments, and their supposed cause, till Heale has the pleasure of hearing Tom answer—

"Fiddlesticks! That's not what's the matter with you. I'll cure you for half-a-crown, and toss you up double or quits.

"Oh!" groans Heale, as he spells away over the letter,—

"Lord Minchampstead having been informed by Mr. Armsworth that Mr. Thurnall is now in the neighbourhood of his estates of Pentremochyn, would feel obliged to him at his earliest convenience to examine into the sanitary state of the cottages thereon, which are said to be much haunted by typhus and other epidemics, and to send him a detailed report, indicating what he thinks necessary for making them thoroughly healthy. Mr. Thurnall will be so good as to make his own charge."

"Well, Mr. Thurnall, you ought to turn a good penny by this," said Heale, half envious of Tom's connection, half contemptuous at his supposed indifference to gain.

"I'll charge what it's worth," said Tom. "Meanwhile, I hope you're going to see Miss Beer to-night."

"Couldn't you just go yourself, my dear sir? It is so late."

"No; I never go near young women. I told you so at first, and I stick to my rule. You'd better go, sir, on my word, or if she's dead before morning, don't say it's my fault."

"Did you ever hear a poor old man so tyrannised over?" said Heale, as Tom coolly went into the passage, brought in the old man's great coat and hat, arrayed him and marched him out, civilly, but firmly.

"Now, Lieutenant, I've half an hour to spare; let's have a jolly chat about the West Indies."

And Tom began with anecdote and joke, and the old seaman laughed till he cried, and went to bed vowing that there never was such a pleasant fellow on earth, and he ought to be physician to Queen Victoria.

Up at five the next morning, the indefatigable Tom had all his work done by ten; and was preparing to start for Pentremochyn, ere Heale was out of bed, when a customer came in who kept him half an hour.

He was a tall broad-shouldered young man, with a red face, protruding bull's eyes, and a moustachio. He was dressed in a complete suit of pink and white plaid, cut jauntily enough. A bright blue cap, a thick gold watch-chain, three or four large rings, a dog-whistle from his button-hole, a fancy cane in his hand, and a little Oxford meerschaum in his mouth, completed his equipment. He lounged in, with an air of careless superiority, while Tom, who was behind the counter, cutting up his day's provision of honey-dew, eyed him curiously.

"Who are you, now? A gentleman? Not quite, I guess. Some squireen of the parts adjacent, and look in somewhat of a crapulocomatose state moreover. I wonder if you are the great Trebooze of Trebooze."

"I say," yawned the young gentleman, "where's old Heale?" and an oath followed the speech, as it did every other one herein recorded.

"The playing half of old Heale is in bed, and I'm his working half. Can I do anything for you?"

"Cool fish," thought the customer. "I say—what have you got there?"

"Australian honey-dew. Did you ever smoke it?"

"I've heard of it; let's see:" and Mr. Trebooze—for it was he—put his hand across the counter unceremoniously, and clawed up some.

"Didn't know you sold tobacco here. Prime stuff. Too strong for me, though, this morning, somehow."

"Ah? A little too much claret last night? I thought so. We'll set that right in five minutes."

"Eh? How did you guess that?" asked Trebooze, with a larger oath than usual.

"Oh, we doctors are men of the world," said Tom, in a cheerful and insinuating tone, as he mixed his man a draught.

"You doctors? You're a cock of a different hackle from old Heale, then."

"I trust so," said Tom.

"By George, I feel better already. I say, you're a trump; I suppose you're Heale's new partner, the man who was washed ashore!"

Tom nodded assent;

"I say—How do you sell that honey-dew?"

"I don't sell it; I'll give you as much as you like, only you shan't smoke it till after dinner."

"Shan't?" said Trebooze, testy and proud.

"Not with my leave, or you'll be complaining two hours hence that I am a humbug, and have done you no good. Get on your horse, and have four hours' gallop on the downs, and you'll feel like a buffalo bull by two o'clock."

Trebooze looked at him with a stupid curiosity and a little awe. He saw that Tom's cool self-possession was not meant for impudence; and something in his tone and manner told him that the boast of being "a man of the world" was not untrue. And of all kinds of men, a man of the world was the man of whom Trebooze stood most in awe. A small squireen, cursed with six or seven hundreds a year of his own, never sent to school, college, or into the army, he had grown up in a narrow circle of squireens like himself, without an object save that of gratifying his animal passions; and had about six years before, being then just of age, settled in life by marrying his housemaid—the only wise thing, perhaps, he ever did. For she, a clever and determined woman, kept him, though not from drunkenness and debt, at least from delirium tremens and ruin, and was, in her rough, vulgar way, his guardian angel—such a one at least, as he was worthy of. More than once has one seen the same seeming folly turn out in practice as wise a step as

could well have been taken; and the coarse nature of the man, which would have crushed and ill-used a delicate and high-minded wife, subdued to something like decency by a help literally meet for it.

There was a pause. Trebooze fancied, and wisely, that the Doctor was a cleverer man than he, and of course would want to show it. So, after the fashion of a country squireen, he felt a longing to "set him down." "He's been a traveller, they say," thought he in that pugnacious, sceptical spirit which is bred, not, as twaddlers fancy, by too extended knowledge, but by the sense of ignorance, and a narrow sphere of thought, which makes a man angry and envious of any one who has seen more than he.

"Buffalo bulls?" said he, half contemptuously; "what do you know about buffalo bulls?"

"I was one once myself," said Tom, "where I lived before."

Trebooze swore. "Don't you put your traveller's lies on me, sir."

"Well, perhaps I dreamt it," said Tom, placidly; "I remember I dreamt at the same time that you were a grizzly bear, fourteen feet long, and wanted to eat me up: but you found me too tough about the hump ribs."

Trebooze stared at his audacity.

"You're a rum hand."

To which Tom made answer in the same elegant strain; and then began a regular word-battle of slang, in which Tom showed himself so really witty a profi-

cient, that Mr. Trebooze laughed himself into good-humour, and ended by—

"I say, you're a good fellow, and I think you and I shall suit."

Tom had his doubts, but did not express them.

"Come up this afternoon and see my child; Mrs. Trebooze thinks it's got swelled glands, or some such woman's nonsense. Bother them, why can't they let the child alone, fussing and doctoring; and she will have you. Heard of you from Mrs. Vavasour, I believe. Our doctor and I have quarrelled, and she said, if I could get you, she'd sooner have you than that old rum-puncheon Heale. And then, you'd better stop and take pot-luck, and we'll make a night of it."

"I have to go round Lord Minchampstead's estates, and will take you on my way: but I'm afraid I shall be too dirty to have the pleasure of dining with Mrs. Trebooze coming back."

"Mrs. Trebooze! She must take what I like; and what's good enough for me is good enough for her, I hope. Come as you are—Liberty Hall at Trebooze;" and out he swaggered.

"Does he bully her?" thought Tom, "or is he hen-pecked, and wants to hide it? I'll see to-night, and play my cards accordingly."

All which Miss Heale had heard. She had been peeping and listening at the glass-door, and her mother also; for no sooner had Trebooze entered the shop, than she had run off to tell her mother the surprising fact, Trebooze's custom having been, for some years

past, courted in vain by Heale. So Miss Heale peeped and peeped at a man whom she regarded with delighted curiosity, because he bore the reputation of being "such a naughty wicked man!" and "so very handsome too, and so distinguished as he looks!" said the poor little fool, to whose novel-fed imagination Mr. Trebooze was an ideal Lothario.

But the surprise of the two dames grew rapidly as they heard Tom's audacity towards the country aristocrat.

"Impudent wretch!" moaned Mrs. Heale to herself. "He'd drive away an angel if he came into the shop."

"Oh, ma! hear how they are going on now."

"I can't bear it, my dear. This man will be the ruin of us. His manners are those of the pot-house, when the cloven foot is shown, which it's his nature as a child of wrath, and we can't expect otherwise."

"Oh, ma! do you hear that Mr. Trebooze has asked him to dinner?"

"Nonsense!"

But it was true.

"Well! if there ain't the signs of the end of the world, which is? All the years your poor father has been here, and never so much as send him a hare, and now this young penniless interloper; and he to dine at Trebooze off purple and fine linen."

"There is not much of that there, ma; I'm sure they are poor enough, for all his pride; and as for her——"

"Yes, my dear; and as for her, though we haven't married squires, my dear, yet we haven't been squires' housemaids, and have adorned our own station, which was good enough for us, and has no need to rise out of it, nor ride on Pharaoh's chariot-wheels after filthy lucre——"

Miss Heale hated poor Mrs. Trebooze with a bitter hatred, because she dreamed insanely that, but for her, she might have secured Mr. Trebooze for herself. And though her ambition was now transferred to the unconscious Tom, that need not make any difference in the said amiable feeling.

But that Tom was a most wonderful person, she had no doubt. He had conquered her heart—so she informed herself passionately again and again; as was very necessary, seeing that the passion, having no real life of its own, required a good deal of blowing to keep it alight. Yes, he had conquered her heart, and he was conquering all hearts likewise. There must be some mystery about him—there should be. And she settled in her novel-bewildered brain, that Tom must be a nobleman in disguise—probably a foreign prince exiled for political offences. Bah! perhaps too many lines have been spent on the poor little fool; but as such fools exist, and people must be as they are, there is no harm in drawing her; and in asking, too—Who will help those young girls of the middle class who, like Miss Heale, are often really less educated than the children of their parents' workmen; sedentary, luxurious, full of petty vanity, gossip,

and intrigue, without work, without purpose, except that of getting married to any one who will ask them —bewildering brain and heart with novels, which, after all, one hardly grudges them; for what other means have they of learning that there is any fairer, nobler life possible, at least on earth, than that of the sordid money-getting, often the sordid puffery and adulteration, which is the atmosphere of their home? Exceptions there are, in thousands, doubtless; and the families of the great city tradesmen, stand, of course, on far higher ground, and are often far better educated, and more high-minded, than the fine ladies, their parents' customers. But, till some better plan of education than the boarding-school is devised for them; till our towns shall see something like in kind to, though sounder and soberer in quality than, the high schools of America; till in country villages the ladies who interest themselves about the poor will recollect that the farmers' and tradesmen's daughters are just as much in want of their influence as the charity children, and will yield a far richer return for their labour, though the one need not interfere with the other; so long will England be full of Miss Heales; fated, when they marry, to bring up sons and daughters as sordid and unwholesome as their mothers.

Tom worked all that day in and out of the Pentremochyn cottages, noting down nuisances and dilapidations: but his head was full of other thoughts; for he had received, the evening before, news which was to him very important, for more reasons than one.

The longer he stayed at Aberalva, the longer he felt inclined to stay. The strange attraction of Grace had, as we have seen, something to do with his purpose: but he saw, too, a good opening for one of those country practices, in which he seemed more and more likely to end. At his native Whitbury, he knew, there was no room for a fresh medical man; and gradually he was making up his mind to settle at Aberalva; to buy out Heale, either with his own money (if he recovered it), or with money borrowed from Mark; to bring his father down to live with him, and in that pleasant wild western place, fold his wings after all his wanderings. And therefore certain news which he had obtained the night before was very valuable to him, in that it put a fresh person into his power, and might, if cunningly used, give him a hold upon the ruling family of the place, and on Lord Scoutbush himself. He had found out that Lucia and Elsley were unhappy together; and found out, too, a little more than was there to find. He could not, of course, be a month among the gossips of Aberalva, without hearing hints that the great folks at the court did not always keep their tempers; for, of family jars, as of everything else on earth, the great and just law stands true:—"What you do in the closet, shall be proclaimed on the housetop."

But the gossips of Aberalva, as women are too often wont to do, had altogether taken the man's side in the quarrel. The reason was, I suppose, that Lucia, conscious of having fallen somewhat in rank, "held up

her head" to Mrs. Trebooze and Mrs. Heale (as they themselves expressed it), and to various other little notabilities of the neighbourhood, rather more than she would have done had she married a man of her own class. She was afraid that they might boast of being intimate with her; that they might take to advising and patronising her as an inexperienced young creature; afraid, even, that she might be tempted, in some unguarded moment, to gossip with them, confide her unhappiness to them, in the blind longing to open her heart to some human being; for there were no resident gentry of her own rank in the neighbourhood. She was too high-minded to complain much to Clara; and her sister Valencia was the very last person to whom she would confess that her run-away-match had not been altogether successful. So she lived alone and friendless, shrinking into herself more and more, while the vulgar women round mistook her honour for pride, and revenged themselves accordingly. She was an uninteresting fine lady, proud and cross, and Elsley was a martyr. "So handsome and agreeable as he was—(and to do him justice, he was the former, and he could be the latter when he chose)—to be tied to that unsociable, stuck-up woman;" and so forth.

All which Tom had heard, and formed his own opinion thereof; which was,—

"All very fine: but I flatter myself I know a little what women are made of; and this I know, that where man and wife quarrel, even if she ends the

battle, it is he who has begun it. I never saw a case yet where the man was not the most in fault; and I'll lay my life John Briggs has led her a pretty life: what else could one expect of him?"

However, he held his tongue, and kept his eyes open withal whenever he went up to Penalva Court, which he had to do very often; for though he had cured the children of their ailments, yet Mrs. Vavasour was perpetually, more or less, unwell, and he could not cure her. Her low spirits, headaches, general want of tone and vitality, puzzled him at first; and would have puzzled him longer, had he not settled with himself that their cause was to be sought in the mind, and not in the body; and at last, gaining courage from certainty, he had hinted as much to Miss Clara the night before, when she came down (as she was very fond of doing) to have a gossip with him in his shop, under the pretence of fetching medicine.

"I don't think I shall send Mrs. Vavasour any more, Miss Clara. There is no use running up a long bill when I do no good; and, what is more, suspect that I can do none, poor lady." And he gave the girl a look which seemed to say, "You had better tell me the truth; for I know everything already."

To which Clara answered by trying to find out how much he did know: but Tom was a cunninger diplomatist than she; and in ten minutes, after having given solemn promises of secresy, and having, by strong expressions of contempt for Mrs. Heale and the village gossips, made Clara understand that he did

not at all take their view of the case, he had poured out to him across the counter all Clara's long-pent indignation and contempt.

"I never said a word of this to a living soul, sir; I was too proud, for my mistress's sake, to let vulgar people know what we suffered. We don't want any of their pity indeed; but you, sir, who have the feelings of a gentleman, and know what the world is, like ourselves——"

"Take care," whispered Tom; "that daughter of Heale's may be listening."

"I'd pull her hair about her ears if I caught her!" quoth Clara; and then ran on to tell how Elsley "never kept no hours, nor no accounts either; so that she has to do everything, poor thing; and no thanks either. And never knows when he'll dine, or when he'll breakfast, or when he'll be in, wandering in and out like a madman; and sits up all night, writing his nonsense. And she'll go down twice and three times a night in the cold, poor dear, to see if he's fallen asleep; and gets abused like a pickpocket for her pains (which was an exaggeration); and lies in bed all the morning, looking at the flies, and calls after her if his shoes want tying, or his finger aches; as helpless as the babe unborn; and will never do nothing useful himself, not even to hang a picture or move a chair, and grumbles at her if he sees her doing anything, because she ain't listening to his prosodies, and snaps, and worrits, and won't speak to her sometimes for a whole morning, the brute."

"But is he not fond of his children?"

"Fond? Yes, his way, and small thanks to him, the little angels! To play with 'em when they're good, and tell them cock-and-a-bull fairy tales—wonder why he likes to put such stuff into their heads—and then send 'em out of the room if they make a noise, because it splits his poor head, and his nerves are so delicate. Wish he had hers, or mine either, Doctor Thurnall; then he'd know what nerves was, in a frail woman, which he uses us both as his negro slaves, or would if I didn't stand up to him pretty sharp now and then, and give him a piece of my mind, which I will do, like the faithful servant in the parable, if he kills me for it, Doctor Thurnall!"

"Does he drink?" asked Tom, bluntly.

"He!" she answered, in a tone which seemed to imply that even one masculine vice would have raised him in her eyes. "He's not man enough, I think; and lives on his slops, and his coffee, and his tapioca; and how's he ever to have any appetite, always a sitting about, heaped up together over his books, with his ribs growing into his backbone?—If he'd only go and take his walk, or get a spade and dig in the garden, or anything but them everlasting papers, which I hates the sight of;" and so forth.

From all which Tom gathered a tolerably clear notion of the poor poet's state of body and mind; as a self-indulgent, unmethodical person, whose ill-temper was owing partly to perpetual brooding over his own thoughts, and partly to dyspepsia, brought on by his

own effeminacy—in both cases, not a thing to be pitied or excused by the hearty and valiant Doctor. And Tom's original contempt for Vavasour took a darker form, perhaps one too dark to be altogether just.

"I'll tackle him, Miss Clara.

"I wish you would: I'm sure he wants some one to look after him just now. He's half wild about some review that somebody's been and done of him in The Times, and has been flinging the paper about the room, and calling all mankind vipers and adders, and hooting herds—it's as bad as swearing, I say—and running to my mistress, to make her read it, and see how the whole world's against him, and then forbidding her to defile her eyes with a word of it; and so on, till she's been crying all the morning, poor dear!"

"Why not laughing at him?"

"Poor thing; that's where it all is: she's just as anxious about his poetry as he is, and would write it just as well as he, I'll warrant, if she hadn't better things to do; and all her fuss is, that people should 'appreciate' him. He's always talking about appreciating, till I hate the sound of the word. How any woman can go on so after a man that behaves as he does! but we're all soft fools, I'm afraid, Doctor Thurnall." And Clara began a languishing look or two across the counter, which made Tom answer to an imaginary Doctor Heale, whom he heard calling from within.

"Yes, Doctor! coming this moment, Doctor!

Good-bye, Miss Clara. I must hear more next time; you may trust me, you know; secret as the grave, and always your friend, and your lady's too, if you will allow me to do myself such an honour. Coming, Doctor!"

And Tom bolted through the glass door, till Miss Clara was safe on her way up the street.

"Very well," said Tom to himself. "Knowledge is power: but how to use it? To get into Mrs. Vavasour's confidence, and show an inclination to take her part against her husband? If she be a true woman, she would order me out of the house on the spot, as surely as a fish-wife would fall tooth and nail on me as a base intruder, if I dared to interfere with her sacred right of being beaten by her husband when she chooses. No; I must go straight to John Briggs himself, and bind him over to keep the peace; and I think I know the way to do it."

So Tom pondered over many plans in his head that day; and then went to Trebooze, and saw the sick child, and sat down to dinner, where his host talked loud about the Treboozes of Trebooze, who fought in the Spanish Armada—or against it; and showed an unbounded belief in the greatness and antiquity of his family, combined with a historic accuracy about equal to that of a good old dame of those parts, who used to say "her family comed over the water, that she knew; but whether it were with the Conqueror, or whether it were wi' Oliver, she couldn't exactly say!"

Then he became great on the subject of old county families in general, and poured out all the vials of his wrath on "that confounded upstart of a Newbroom, Lord Minchampstead," supplanting all the fine old blood in the country—"Why, sir, that Pentremochyn, and Carcarrow moors too (—— good shooting there, there used to be), they ought to be mine, sir, if every man had his rights!" And then followed a long story; and a confused one withal, for by this time Mr. Trebooze had drunk a great deal too much wine, and as he became aware of the fact, became proportionately anxious that Tom should drink too much also; out of which story Tom picked the plain facts, that Trebooze's father had mortgaged Pentremochyn estate for more than its value, and that Lord Minchampstead had foreclosed; while some equally respectable uncle, or cousin, just deceased, had sold the reversion of Carcarrow to the same mighty Cotton Lord twenty years before. "And this is the way, sir, the land gets eaten up by a set of tinkers, and cobblers, and money-lending jobbers, who suck the blood of the aristocracy!" The oaths we omit, leaving the reader to pepper Mr. Trebooze's conversation therewith, up to any degree of heat which may suit his palate.

Tom sympathised with him deeply, of course; and did not tell him, as he might have done, that he thought the sooner such cumberers of the ground were cleared off, whether by an encumbered estates' act, such as we may see yet in England, or by their own

suicidal folly, the better it would be for the universe in general, and perhaps for themselves in particular. But he only answered with pleasant effrontery—

"Ah, my dear sir, I am sure there are hundreds of good sportsmen who can sympathise with you deeply. The wonder is, that you do not unite and defend yourselves. For not only in the West of England, but in Ireland, and in Wales, and in the north, too, if one is to believe those novels of Currer Bell's and her sister, there is a large and important class of landed proprietors of the same stamp as yourself, and exposed to the very same dangers. I wonder at times that you do not all join, and use your combined influence on the Government."

"The Government? All a set of Whig traitors! Call themselves Conservative, or what they like. Traitors, sir! from that fellow Peel upwards—all combined to crush the landed gentry—ruin the Church—betray the country party—D'Israeli—Derby—Free trade—ruined, sir!—Maynooth—Protection—treason—help yourself, and pass the—you know, old fellow——"

And Mr. Trebooze's voice died away, and he slumbered, but not softly.

The door opened, and in marched Mrs. Trebooze, tall, tawdry, and terrible.

"Mr. Trebooze! it's past eleven o'clock!"

"Hush, my dear madam! He is sleeping so sweetly," said Tom, rising, and gulping down a glass, not of wine, but of strong ammonia and water. The

rogue had put a phial thereof in his pocket that morning, expecting that, as Trebooze had said, he would be required to make a night of it.

She was silent; for to rouse her tyrant was more than she dare do. If awakened, he would crave for brandy and water; and if he got that sweet poison, he would probably become furious. She stood for half a minute; and Tom, who knew her story well, watched her curiously.

"She is a fine woman: and with a far finer heart in her than that brute. Her eyebrow and eye, now, have the true Siddons' stamp; the great white forehead, and sharp-cut little nostril, breathing scorn—and what a Siddons-like attitude!—I should like, madam, to see the child again before I go."

"If you are fit, sir," answered she.

"Brave woman; comes to the point at once. I am a poor doctor, madam, and not a country gentleman; and have neither money nor health to spend in drinking too much wine."

"Then why do you encourage him in it, sir? I had expected a very different sort of conduct from you, sir."

Tom did not tell her what she would not (no woman will) understand; that it is morally and socially impossible to escape from the table of a fool, till either he or you are conquered; and she was too shrewd to be taken in by commonplace excuses; so he looked her very full in the face, and replied a little haughtily, with a slow and delicate articulation,

using his lips more than usual, and yet compressing them:—

"I beg your pardon, madam, if I have unintentionally displeased you: but if you ever do me the honour of knowing more of me, you will be the first to confess that your words are unjust. Do you wish me to see your son, or do you not?"

Poor Mrs. Trebooze looked at him, with an eye which showed that she had been accustomed to study character keenly, perhaps in self-defence. She saw that Tom was sober; he had taken care to prove that, by the way in which he spoke; and she saw, too, that he was a better bred man than her husband, as well as a cleverer. She dropped her eye before his; heaved something very like a sigh; and then said, in her curt, fierce tone, which yet implied a sort of sullen resignation—

"Yes; come up-stairs."

Tom went up, and looked at the boy again, as he lay sleeping. A beautiful child of four years old, as large and fair a child as man need see; and yet there was on him the curse of his father's sins; and Tom knew it, and knew that his mother knew it also.

"What a noble boy!" said he, after looking, not without honest admiration, upon the sleeping child, who had kicked off his bed-clothes, and lay in a wild graceful attitude, as children are wont to lie; just like an old Greek statue of Cupid. "It all depends upon you, madam, now."

"On me?" she asked, in a startled, suspicious tone.

"Yes. He is a magnificent boy: but—I can only give palliatives. It depends upon your care now."

"He will have that, at least, I should hope," she said, nettled.

"And on your influence ten years hence," went on Tom.

"My influence?"

"Yes; only keep him steady, and he may grow up a magnificent man. If not—you will excuse me—but you must not let him live as freely as his father; the constitutions of the two are very different."

"Don't talk so, sir. Steady? His father makes him drunk now, if he can; teaches him to swear, because it is manly—God help him and me!"

Tom's cunning and yet kind shaft had sped. He guessed that with a coarse woman like Mrs. Trebooze his best plan was to come as straight to the point as he could; and he was right. Ere half an hour was over, that woman had few secrets on earth which Tom did not know.

"Let me give you one hint before I go," said he at last. "Persuade your husband to go into a militia regiment."

"Why? He would see so much company, and it would be so expensive."

"The expense would repay itself ten times over. The company which he would see would be sober company, in which he would be forced to keep in order. He would have something to do in the world; and he'd do it well. He is just cut out for a soldier,

and might have made a gallant one by now, if he had had other men's chances. He will find he does his militia work well; and it will be a new interest, and a new pride, and a new life to him. And meanwhile, madam, what you have said to me is sacred. I do not pretend to advise or interfere. Only tell me if I can be of use—how, when, and where—and command me as your servant."

And Tom departed, having struck another root; and was up at four the next morning (he never worked at night; for, he said, he never could trust after-dinner brains), drawing out a detailed report of the Pentremochyn cottages, which he sent to Lord Minchampstead with—

"And your lordship will excuse my saying, that to put the cottages into the state in which your lordship, with your known wish for progress of all kinds, would wish to see them is a responsibility which I dare not take on myself, as it would involve a present outlay of not less than £450. This sum would be certainly repaid to your Lordship and your tenants, in the course of the next three years, by the saving in poor-rates; an opinion for which I subjoin my grounds drawn from the books of the medical officer, Mr. Heale: but the responsibility and possible unpopularity, which employing so great a sum would involve, is more than I can, in the present dependent condition of poor-law medical officers, dare to undertake, in justice to Mr. Heale my employer, save at your special command. I am bound, however, to

inform your lordship, that this outlay would, I think, perfectly defend the hamlets, not only from that visit of the cholera which we have every reason to expect next summer, but also from those zymotic diseases which (as your lordship will see by my returns) make up more than sixty-five per cent of the aggregate sickness of the estate."

Which letter the old Cotton Lord put in his pocket, rode into Whitbury therewith, and showed it to Mark Armsworth.

"Well, Mr. Armsworth, what am I to do?"

"Well, my Lord; I told you what sort of a man you'd have to do with; one that does his work thoroughly, and, I think, pays you a compliment, by thinking that you want it done thoroughly."

Lord Minchampstead was of the same opinion; but he did not say so. Few, indeed, have ever heard Lord Minchampstead give his opinion: though many a man has seen him act on it.

"I'll send down orders to my agent."

"Don't."

"Why, then, my good friend?"

"Agents are always in league with farmers, or guardians, or builders, or drain-tile makers, or attorneys, or bankers, or somebody; and either you'll be told that the work don't need doing; or have a job brewed out of it, to get off a lot of unsaleable drain-tiles, or cracked soil-pans; or to get farm ditches dug, and perhaps the highway rates saved building culverts, and fifty dodges beside. I know their game; and

you ought, too, by now, my lord, begging your pardon."

"Perhaps I do, Mark," said his lordship with a chuckle.

"So, I say, let the man that found the fox, run the fox, and kill the fox, and take the brush home."

"And so it shall be," quoth my Lord Minchampstead.

CHAPTER IX.

"AM I NOT A WOMAN AND A SISTER?"

BUT what was the mysterious bond between La Cordifiamma and the American, which had prevented Scoutbush from following the example of his illustrious progenitor, and taking a viscountess from off the stage?

Certainly, any one who had seen her with him on the morning after Scoutbush's visit to the Mellots, would have said that, if the cause was love, the love was all on one side.

She was standing by the fireplace in a splendid pose, her arm resting on the chimney-piece, the book from which she had been reciting in one hand, the other playing in her black curls, as her eyes glanced back ever and anon at her own profile in the mirror. Stangrave was half sitting in a low chair by her side, half kneeling on the footstool before her, looking up beseechingly, as she looked down tyrannically.

"Stupid, this reciting? Of course it is! I want realities, not shams; life, not the stage; nature, not art."

"Throw away the book, then, and words, and art, and live!"

She knew well what he meant; but she answered as if she had misunderstood him.

"Thanks, I live already, and in good company enough. My ghost-husbands are as noble as they are obedient; do all which I demand of them, and vanish on my errands when I tell them. Can you guess who my last is? Since I tired of Egmont, I have taken Sir Galahad, the spotless knight. Did you ever read the Mort d'Arthur?"

"A hundred times."

"Of course!" and she spoke in a tone of contempt so strong that it must have been affected. "What have you not read! And what have you copied. No wonder that these English have been what they have been for centuries, while their heroes have been the Galahads, and their Homer the Mort d'Arthur."

"Enjoy your Utopia!" said he bitterly. "Do you fancy they acted up to their ideals? They dreamed of the Quest of the Sangreal: but which of them ever went upon it?"

"And does it count for nothing that they felt it the finest thing in the world to have gone on it, had it been possible? Be sure if their ideal was so self-sacrificing, so lofty, their practice was ruled by something higher than the almighty dollar."

"And so are some other men's, Marie," answered he reproachfully.

"Yes, forsooth;—when the almighty dollar is there already, and a man has ten times as much to spend every day as he can possibly invest in French cookery,

and wines, and fine clothes, then he begins to lay out his surplus nobly on self-education, and the patronage of art, and the theatre—for merely æsthetic purposes, of course; and when the lust of the flesh has been satisfied, thinks himself an archangel, because he goes on to satisfy the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Christ was of old the model, and Sir Galahad was the hero. Now the one is exchanged for Goethe, and the other for Wilhelm Meister."

"Cruel! You know that my Goethe fever is long past. How would you have known of its existence if I had not confessed it to you as a sin of old years? Have I not said to you, again and again, show me the thing which you would have me do for your sake, and see if I will not do it!"

"For my sake? A noble reason! Show yourself the thing which you will do for its own sake; because it ought to be done. Show it yourself, I say; I cannot show you. If your own eyes cannot see the Sangreal, and the angels who are bearing it before you, it is because they are dull and gross; and am I Milton's archangel, to purge them with euphrasy and rue? If you have a noble heart, you will find for yourself the noblest Quest. If not, who can prove to you that it is noble?" And tapping impatiently with her foot, she went on to herself—

> "'A gentle sound, an awful light!
> Three angels bear the holy Grail:
> With folded feet, in stoles of white,
> On sleeping wings they sail.

Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
The spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides, the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.'

"Why, there was not a knight of the round table, was there, who did not give up all to go upon that Quest, though only one was found worthy to fulfil it? But now-a-days, the knights sit drinking hock and champagne, or drive sulky-wagons, and never fancy that there is a Quest at all."

"Why talk in these parables?"

"So the Jews asked of their prophets. They are no parables to my ghost-husband, Sir Galahad. Now go, if you please; I must be busy, and write letters."

"He rose with a look, half of disappointment, half amused, and yet his face bore a firmness which seemed to say, "You will be mine yet." As he rose, he cast his eye upon the writing-table, and upon a letter which lay there: and as he did so, his cheek grew pale, and his brows knitted.

The letter was addressed to "Thomas Thurnall, Esq., Aberalva."

"Is this, then, your Sir Galahad?" asked he, after a pause, during which he had choked down his rising jealousy, while she looked first at herself in the glass, and then at him, and then at herself again, with a determined and triumphant air.

"And what if it be?"

"So he, then, has achieved the Quest of the Sangreal?"

Stangrave spoke bitterly, and with an emphasis upon the "he;" and—

"What if he have? Do you know him?" answered she, while her face lighted up with eager interest, which she did not care to conceal, perhaps chose, in her woman's love of tormenting, to parade.

"I knew a man of that name once," he replied, in a carefully careless tone, which did not deceive her; "an adventurer—a doctor, if I recollect—who had been in Texas and Mexico, and I know not where besides. Agreeable enough he was; but as for your Quest of the Sangreal, whatever it may be, he seemed to have as little notion of anything beyond his own interest as any Greek I ever met."

"Unjust! Your words only show how little you can see! That man, of all men I ever met, saw the Quest at once, and followed it, at the risk of his own life, as far at least as he was concerned with it:—ay, even when he pretended to see nothing. Oh, there is more generosity in that man's affected selfishness, than in all the noisy good-nature which I have met with in the world. Thurnall! oh, you know his nobleness as little as he knows it himself."

"Then he, I am to suppose, is your phantom-husband, for as long, at least, as your present dream lasts?" asked he, with white, compressed lips.

"He might have been, I believe," she answered carelessly, "if he had even taken the trouble to ask me."

"Marie, this is too much! Do you not know to

whom you speak? To one who deserves, if not common courtesy, at least common mercy."

"Because he adores me, and so forth? So has many a man done; or told me that he has done so. Do you know that I might be a viscountess to-morrow, so Sabina informs me, if I but chose?"

"A viscountess? Pray accept your effete English aristocrat, and, as far as I am concerned, accept my best wishes for your happiness."

"My effete English aristocrat, did I show him that pedigree of mine which I have ere now threatened to show you, would perhaps be less horrified at it than you are."

"Marie, I cannot bear this! Tell me only what you mean. What care I for pedigree? I want you —worship you—and that is enough, Marie!"

"You admire me because I am beautiful. What thanks do I owe you for finding out so patent a fact? What do you do more to me than I do to myself?" and she glanced back once more at the mirror.

"Marie, you know that your words are false; I do more——"

"You admire me," interrupted she, "because I am clever. What thanks to you for that, again? What do you do more to me than you do to yourself?"

"And this, after all——"

"After what? After you found me, or rather I found you—you, the critic, the arbiter of the green-room, the highly-organised do-nothings—teaching others how to do nothing most gracefully; the

would-be Goethe who must, for the sake of his own self-development, try experiments on every weak woman whom he met. And I, the new phenomenon, whom you must appreciate to show your own taste, patronise to show your own liberality, develop to show your own insight into character. You found yourself mistaken! You had attempted to play with the tigress—and behold she was talons; to angle for the silly fish—and behold the fish was the better angler, and caught you."

"Marie, have mercy! Is your heart iron?"

"No; but fire, as my name shows:" and she stood looking down on him with a glare of dreadful beauty.

"Fire, indeed!"

"Yes, fire, that I may scorch you, kindle you, madden you, to do my work, and wear the heart of fire which I wear day and night!"

Stangrave looked at her startled. Was she mad? Her face did not say so; her brow was white, her features calm, her eye fierce and contemptuous, but clear, steady, full of meaning.

"So you know Mr. Thurnall?" said she, after a while.

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Because he is the only friend I have on earth."

"The only friend, Marie?"

"The only one," answered she calmly, "who, seeing the right, has gone and done it forthwith. When did you see him last?"

"I have not been acquainted with Mr. Thurnall for some years," said Stangrave, haughtily.

"In plain words, you have quarrelled with him?"

Stangrave bit his lip.

"He and I had a difference. He insulted my nation, and we parted."

She laughed a long, loud, bitter laugh, which rang through Stangrave's ears.

"Insulted your nation? And on what grounds, pray?"

"About that accursed slavery question!"

La Cordifiamma looked at him with firm-closed lips a while.

"So then! I was not aware of this! Even so long ago you saw the Sangreal, and did not know it when you saw it. No wonder that since then you have been staring at it for months, in your very hands, played with it, admired it, made verses about it, to show off your own taste: and yet were blind to it the whole time! Farewell, then!"

"Marie, what do you mean?" and Stangrave caught both her hands.

"Hush, if you please. I know you are eloquent enough, when you choose, though you have been somewhat dumb and monosyllabic to-night in the presence of the actress whom you undertook to educate. But I know that you can be eloquent, so spare me any brilliant appeals, which can only go to prove that already settled fact. Between you and me lie two great gulfs. The one I have told you of; and from

it I shrink. The other I have not told you of; from it you would shrink."

"The first is your Quest of the Sangreal."

She smiled assent, bitterly enough.

"And the second?"

She did not answer. She was looking at herself in the mirror; and Stangrave, in spite of his almost doting affection, flushed with anger, almost contempt, at her vanity.

And yet, was it vanity which was expressed in that face? No; but dread, horror, almost disgust, as she gazed with side-long, startled eyes, struggling, and yet struggling in vain, to turn her face from some horrible sight, as if her own image had been the Gorgon's head.

"What is it? Marie, speak!"

But she answered nothing. For that last question she had no heart to answer; no heart to tell him that in her veins were some drops, at least, of the blood of slaves. Instinctively she had looked round at the mirror—for might he not, if he had eyes, discover that secret for himself? Were there not in her features traces of that taint? And as she looked,—was it the mere play of her excited fancy,—or did her eyelid slope more and more, her nostril shorten and curl, her lips enlarge, her mouth itself protrude?

It was more than the play of fancy; for Stangrave saw it as well as she. Her actress's imagination, fixed on the African type with an intensity proportioned to her dread of seeing it in herself, had

moulded her features, for the moment, into the very shape which it dreaded. And Stangrave saw it, and shuddered as he saw.

Another half minute, and that face also had melted out of the mirror, at least for Marie's eyes; and in its place an ancient negress, white-haired, withered as the wrinkled ape, but with eyes closed—in death. Marie knew that face well; a face which haunted many a dream of hers; once seen, but never forgotten since; for to that old dame's coffin had her mother, the gay quadroon woman, flaunting in finery which was the price of shame, led Marie when she was but a three years' child; and Marie had seen her bend over the corpse, and call it her dear old granny, and weep bitter tears.

Suddenly she shook off the spell, and looked round and down, terrified, self-conscious. Her eye caught Stangrave's; she saw, or thought she saw, by the expression of his face, that he knew all, and burst away with a shriek.

He sprang up and caught her in his arms. "Marie! Beloved Marie!" She looked up at him struggling; the dark expression had vanished, and Stangrave's love-blinded eyes could see nothing in that face but the refined and yet rich beauty of the Italian.

"Marie, this is mere madness; you excite yourself till you know not what you say, or what you are——"

"I know what I am," murmured she: but he hurried on unheeding.

"You love me, you know you love me; and you

madden yourself by refusing to confess it!" He felt her heart throb as he spoke, and knew that he spoke truth. "What gulfs are these you dream of? No; I will not ask. There is no gulf between me and one whom I adore, who has thrown a spell over me which I cannot resist, which I glory in not resisting; for you have been my guide, my morning star, which has awakened me to new life. If I have a noble purpose upon earth, if I have roused myself from that conceited dream of self-culture which now looks to me so cold, and barren, and tawdry, into the hope of becoming useful, beneficent—to whom do I owe it but to you, Marie? No; there is no gulf, Marie! You are my wife, and you alone!" And he held her so firmly, and gazed down upon her with such strong manhood, that her woman's heart quailed; and he might, perhaps, have conquered then and there, had not Sabina, summoned by her shriek, entered hastily.

"Good heavens! what is the matter?"

"Wait but one minute, Mrs. Mellot," said he; "the next, I shall introduce you to my bride."

"Never! never! never!" cried she, and breaking from him, flew into Sabina's arms. "Leave me, leave me to bear my curse alone!"

And she broke out into such wild weeping, and refused so wildly to hear another word from Stangrave, that he went away in despair, the prize snatched from his grasp in the very moment of seeming victory.

He went in search of Claude, who had agreed to meet him at the Exhibition in Trafalgar Square.

Thither Stangrave rolled away in his cab, his heart full of many thoughts. Marie's words about him, though harsh and exaggerated, were on the whole true. She had fascinated him utterly. To marry her was now the one object of his life: she had awakened in him, as he had confessed, noble desires to be useful: but the discovery that he was to be useful to the negro, that abolition was the Sangreal in the quest of which he was to go forth, was as disagreeable a discovery as he could well have made.

From public life in any shape, with all its vulgar noise, its petty chicanery, its pandering to the mob whom he despised, he had always shrunk, as so many Americans of his stamp have done. He had no wish to struggle, unrewarded and disappointed, in the ranks of the minority; while to gain place and power on the side of the majority was to lend himself to that fatal policy which, ever since the Missouri Compromise of 1820, has been gradually making the northern states more and more the tools of the southern ones. He had no wish to be threatened in Congress with having his Northerner's "ears nailed to the counter, like his own base coin," or to be informed that he, with the 17,000,000 of the north, were the "White Slaves" of a southern aristocracy of 350,000 slaveholders. He had enough comprehension of, enough admiration for the noble principles of the American Constitution to see that the democratic mobs of Irish and Germans, who were stupidly playing into the hands of the Southerners, were not

exactly carrying them out; but he had no mind to face either Irish or Southerners. The former were too vulgar for his delicacy; the latter too aristocratic for his pride. Sprung, as he held (and rightly), from as fine old English blood as any Virginian (though it did happen to be Puritan, and not Cavalier), he had no lust to come into contact with men who considered him much further below them in rank than an English footman is below an English nobleman; who, indeed, would some of them look down on the English nobleman himself as a mushroom of yesterday. So he compounded with his conscience by ignoring the whole matter, and by looking on the state of public affairs on his side of the Atlantic with a cynicism which very soon (as is usual with rich men) passed into Epicureanism. Poetry and music, pictures and statues, amusement and travel, became his idols, and cultivation his substitute for the plain duty of patriotism, and wandering luxuriously over the world, he learnt to sentimentalise over cathedrals and monasteries, pictures and statues, saints and kaisers, with a lazy regret that such "forms of beauty and nobleness" were no longer possible in a world of scrip and railroads: but without any notion that it was his duty to reproduce in his own life, or that of his country, as much as he could of the said beauty and nobleness. And now he was sorely tried. It was interesting enough to "develop" the peculiar turn of Marie's genius, by writing for her plays about liberty, just as he would have written plays about jealousy, or

anything else for representing which she had "capabilities." But to be called on to act in that Slavery question, the one in which he knew (as all sensible Americans do) that the life and death of his country depended, and which for that very reason he had carefully ignored till a more convenient season, finding in its very difficulty and danger an excuse for leaving it to solve itself:—to have this thrust on him, and by her, as the price of the thing which he must have, or die! If she had asked for his right hand, he would have given it sooner; and he entered the Royal Academy that day in much the same humour as that of a fine lady who should find herself suddenly dragged from the ball-room into the dust-hole, in her tenderest array of gauze and jewels, and there peremptorily compelled to sift the cinders, under the superintendence of the sweep and the pot-boy.

Glad to escape from questions which he had rather not answer too soon, he went in search of Claude, and found him before one of those pre-Raphaelite pictures, which Claude does not appreciate as he ought.

"Desinit in Culicem mulier formosa supernè," said Stangrave, as he looked over Claude's shoulder; "but I suppose he followed nature, and copied his model."

"That he didn't," said Claude, "for I know who his model was: but if he did he had no business to do so. I object on principle to these men's notion of what copying nature means. I don't deny him talent.

I am ready to confess that there is more imagination and more honest work in that picture than in any one in the room. The hysterical, all but grinning joy upon the mother's face is a miracle of truth; I have seen the expression more than once; doctors see it often, in the sudden revulsion from terror and agony to certainty and peace; I only marvel where he ever met it: but the general effect is unpleasing, marred by patches of sheer ugliness, like that child's foot. There is the same mistake in all his pictures. Whatever they are, they are not beautiful; and no magnificence of surface-colouring will make up, in my eyes, for wilful ugliness of form. I say that nature is beautiful; and therefore nature cannot have been truly copied, or the general effect would have been beautiful also. I never found out the fallacy till the other day, when looking at a potrait by one of them. The woman for whom it was meant was standing by my side, young and lovely; the portrait hung there neither young nor lovely, but a wrinkled caricature twenty years older than the model."

"I surely know the portrait you mean; Lady D—'s."

"Yes. He had simply, under pretence of following nature, caricatured her into a woman twenty years older than she is."

"But did you ever see a modern portrait which more perfectly expressed character; which more completely fulfilled the requirements which you laid down a few evenings since?"

"Never; and that makes me all the more cross with the wilful mistake of it. He had painted every wrinkle."

"Why not, if they were there?"

"Because he had painted a face not one-twentieth of the size of life. What right had he to cram into that small space all the marks which nature had spread over a far larger one?"

"Why not, again, if he diminished the marks in proportion?"

"Just what neither he nor any man could do, without making them so small as to be invisible, save under a microscope: and the result was, that he had caricatured every wrinkle, as his friend has in those horrible knuckles of Shem's wife. Besides, I deny utterly your assertion that one is bound to paint what is there. On that very fallacy are they all making shipwreck."

"Not paint what is there? And you are the man who talks of art being highest when it copies nature."

"Exactly. And therefore you must paint, not what is there, but what you see there. They forget that human beings are men with two eyes, and not daguerreotype lenses with one eye, and so are contriving and striving to introduce into their pictures the very defect of the daguerreotype which the stereoscope is required to correct."

"I comprehend. They forget that the double vision of our two eyes gives a softness, and indistinctness, and roundness, to every outline."

"Exactly so; and therefore, while for distant landscapes, motionless, and already softened by atmosphere, the daguerreotype is invaluable (I shall do nothing else this summer but work at it), yet for taking portraits, in any true sense, it will be always useless, not only for the reason I just gave, but for another one which the pre-Raphaelites have forgotten."

"Because all the features cannot be in focus at once?"

"Oh no, I am not speaking of that. Art, for aught I know, may overcome that; for it is a mere defect in the instrument. What I mean is this: it tries to represent as still what never yet was still for the thousandth part of a second: that is, the human face; and as seen by a spectator who is perfectly still, which no man ever yet was. My dear fellow, don't you see that what some painters call idealising a portrait is, if it be wisely done, really painting for you the face which you see, and know, and love; her ever-shifting features, with expression varying more rapidly than the gleam of the diamond on her finger; features which you, in your turn, are looking at with ever-shifting eyes; while, perhaps, if it is a face which you love and have lingered over, a dozen other expressions equally belonging to it are hanging in your memory, and blending themselves with the actual picture on your retina:—till every little angle is somewhat rounded, every little wrinkle somewhat softened, every little shade somewhat blended with the surrounding light, so that the sum total of what you see, and are intended

by Heaven to see, is something far softer, lovelier—younger, perhaps, thank Heaven—than it would look if your head was screwed down in a vice, to look with one eye at her head screwed down in a vice also:—though even that, thanks to the muscles of the eye, would not produce the required ugliness; and the only possible method of fulfilling the pre-Raphaelite ideal would be, to set a petrified Cyclops to paint his petrified brother."

"You are spiteful."

"Not at all. I am standing up for art, and for nature too. For instance: Sabina has wrinkles. She says, too, that she has grey hairs coming. The former I won't see, and therefore don't. The latter I can't see, because I am not looking for them."

"Nor I either," said Stangrave smiling. "I assure you the announcement is new to me."

"Of course. Who can see wrinkles in the light of those eyes, that smile, that complexion?"

"Certainly," said Stangrave, "if I asked for her portrait, as I shall do some day, and the artist sat down and painted the said 'wastes of time,' on pretence of their being there, I should consider it an impertinence on his part. What business has he to spy out what nature has taken such charming trouble to conceal?"

"Again," said Claude, "such a face as Cordifiamma's. When it is at rest, in deep thought, there are lines in it which utterly puzzle one—touches which are Eastern, Kabyle, almost Quadroon."

Stangrave started. Claude went on unconscious:—

"But who sees them in the light of that beauty? They are defects, no doubt, but defects which no one would observe without deep study of the face. They express her character no more than a scar would; and therefore when I paint her, as I must and will, I shall utterly ignore them. If, on the other hand, I met the same lines in a face which I knew to have Quadroon blood in it, I should religiously copy them; because then they would be integral elements of the face. You understand?"

"Understand?—yes," answered Stangrave, in a tone which made Claude look up.

That strange scene of half an hour before flashed across him. What if it were no fancy? What if Marie had African blood in her veins? And Stangrave shuddered, and felt for the moment that thousands of pounds would be a cheap price to pay for the discovery that his fancy was a false one.

"Yes—oh—I beg your pardon," said he, recovering himself. "I was thinking of something else. But, as you say, what if she had Quadroon blood?"

"I? I never said so, or dreamt of it."

"Oh! I mistook. Do you know, though, where she came from?"

"I? You forget, my dear fellow, that you yourself introduced her to us."

"Of course; but I thought Mrs. Mellot might—women always makes confidences."

"All we know is, what I suppose you knew long

ago, that her most intimate friend, next to you, seems to be an old friend of ours, named Thurnall."

"An old friend of yours?"

"Oh yes; we have known him these fifteen years. Met him first at Paris; and after that went round the world with him, and saw infinite adventures. Sabina and I spent three months with him once, among the savages in a South-sea Island, and a very pretty romance our stay and our escape would make. We were all three, I believe, to have been cooked and eaten, if Tom had not got us off by that wonderful address which, if you know him, you must know well enough."

"Yes," answered Stangrave, coldly, as in a dream; "I have known Mr. Thurnall in past years; but not in connection with La Signora Cordifiamma. I was not aware till this moment—this morning, I mean—that they knew each other."

"You astound me; why, she talks of him to us all day long, as of one to whom she has the deepest obligations; she was ready to rush into our arms when she first found that we knew him. He is a greater hero in her eyes, I sometimes fancy, than even you are. She does nothing (or fancies that she does nothing, for you know her pretty wilfulness) without writing for his advice."

"I a hero in her eyes? I was really not aware of that fact," said Stangrave, more coldly than ever; for bitter jealousy had taken possession of his heart. "Do you know, then, what this same obligation may be?"

"I never asked. I hate gossiping, and I make a rule to inquire into no secrets but such as are voluntarily confided to me; and I know that she has never told Sabina."

"I suppose she is married to him. That is the simplest explanation of the mystery."

"Impossible! What can you mean? If she ever marries living man, she will marry you."

"Then she will never marry living man," said Stangrave to himself. "Good-bye, my dear fellow; I have an engagement at the Traveller's." And away went Stangrave, leaving Claude sorely puzzled, but little dreaming of the powder-magazine into which he had put a match.

But he was puzzled still more that night, when by the latest post a note came—

"From Stangrave!" said Claude. "Why, in the name of all wonders!"—and he read:—

"Good-bye. I am just starting for the Continent, on sudden and urgent business. What my destination is I hardly can tell you yet. You will hear from me in the course of the summer."

Claude's countenance fell, and the note fell likewise. Sabina snatched it up, read it, and gave La Cordifiamma a look which made her spring from the sofa, and snatch it in turn.

She read it through, with trembling hands, and blanching cheeks, and then dropped fainting upon the floor.

They laid her on the sofa, and while they were

recovering her, Claude told Sabina the only clue which he had to the American's conduct, namely, that afternoon's conversation.

Sabina shook her head over it; for to her, also, the American's explanation had suggested itself. Was Marie Thurnall's wife? Or did she—it was possible, however painful—stand to him in some less honourable relation, which she would fain forget now, in a new passion for Stangrave? For that Marie loved Stangrave, Sabina knew well enough.

The doubt was so ugly that it must be solved; and when she had got the poor thing safe into her bedroom she alluded to it as gently as she could.

Marie sprang up in indignant innocence.

"He! Whatever he may be to others, I know not: but to me he has been purity and nobleness itself—a brother, a father! Yes; if I had no other reason for trusting him, I should love him for that alone; that however tempted he may have been, and Heaven knows he was tempted, he could respect the honour of his friend, though that friend lay sleeping in a soldier's grave ten thousand miles away."

And Marie threw herself upon Sabina's neck, and under the pressure of her misery sobbed out to her the story of her life. What it was need not be told. A little common sense, and a little knowledge of human nature, will enable the reader to fill up for himself the story of a beautiful slave.

Sabina soothed her, and cheered her; and soothed and cheered her most of all by telling her in return

the story of her own life; not so dark a one, but almost as sad and strange. And poor Marie took heart, when she found in her great need a sister in the communion of sorrows.

"And you have been through all this, so beautiful and bright as you are! You whom I should have fancied always living the life of the humming-bird: and yet not a scar or a wrinkle has it left behind!"

"They were there once, Marie! but God and Claude smoothed them away."

"I have no Claude,—and no God, I think, at times."

"No God, Marie! Then how did you come hither?"

Marie was silent, reproved; and then passionately—

"Why does He not right my people?"

That question was one to which Sabina's little scheme of the universe had no answer; why should it, while many a scheme which pretends to be far vaster and more infallible has none as yet?

So she was silent, and sat with Marie's head upon her bosom, caressing the black curls, till she had soothed her into sobbing exhaustion.

"There; lie there and rest: you shall be my child, my poor Marie. I have a fresh child every week; but I shall find plenty of room in my heart for you, my poor hunted deer."

"You will keep my secret?"

"Why keep it? No one need be ashamed of it here in free England."

"But he—he—you do not know, Sabina! Those Northerners, with all their boasts of freedom, shrink from us just as much as our own masters."

"Oh, Marie, do not be so unjust to him! He is too noble, and you must know it yourself."

"Ay, if he stood alone; if he were even going to live in England; if he would let himself be himself; but public opinion," sobbed the poor self-tormentor—"It has been his God, Sabina, to be a leader of taste and fashion—admired and complete—the Crichton of Newport and Brooklyn. And he could not bear scorn, the loss of society. Why should he bear it for me? If he had been one of the abolitionist party, it would have been different: but he has no sympathy with them, good, narrow, pious people, or they with him: he could not be satisfied in their society—or I either, for I crave after it all as much as he—wealth, luxury, art, brilliant company, admiration,—oh, inconsistent wretch that I am! And that makes me love him all the more, and yet makes me so harsh to him, wickedly cruel, as I was to-day; because when I am reproving his weakness, I am reproving my own, and because I am angry with myself, I grow angry with him too—envious of him, I do believe at moments, and all his success and luxury!"

And so poor Marie sobbed out her confused confession of that strange double nature which so many Quadroons seem to owe to their mixed blood; a strong side of deep feeling, ambition, energy, an intellect rather Greek in its rapidity than English in sturdi-

ness; and withal a weak side, of instability, inconsistency, hasty passion, love of present enjoyment, sometimes, too, a tendency to untruth, which is the mark, not perhaps of the African specially, but of every enslaved race.

Consolation was all that Sabina could give. It was too late to act. Stangrave was gone, and week after week rolled by without a line from the wanderer.

CHAPTER X.

THE RECOGNITION.

ELSLEY VAVASOUR is sitting one morning in his study, every comfort of which is of Lucia's arrangement and invention, beating the home-preserve of his brains for pretty thoughts. On he struggles through that wild, and too luxuriant cover; now brought up by a "lawyer," now stumbling over a root, now bogged in a green spring, now flushing a stray covey of birds of Paradise, now a sphinx, chimæra, strix, lamia, fire-drake, flying-donkey, two-headed eagle (Austrian, as will appear shortly), or other portent only to be seen now-a-days in the recesses of that enchanted forest, the convolutions of a poet's brain. Up they whir and rattle, making, like most game, more noise than they are worth. Some get back, some dodge among the trees; the fair shots are few and far between: but Elsley blazes away right and left with trusty quill; and, to do him justice, seldom misses his aim, for practice has made him a sure and quick marksman in his own line. Moreover, all is game which gets up to-day; for he is shooting for the kitchen, or rather for the London market, as many a noble sportsman

does now-a-days, and thinks no shame. His new volume of poems ("The Wreck" included) is in the press: but behold, it is not as long as the publisher thinks fit, and Messrs. Brown and Younger have written down to entreat in haste for some four hundred lines more, on any subject which Mr. Vavasour may choose. And therefore is Elsley beating his home covers, heavily shot over though they have been already this season, in hopes that a few head of his own game may still be left: or in default (for human nature is the same, in poets and in sportsmen), that a few head may have strayed in out of his neighbours' manors.

At last the sport slackens; for the sportsman is getting tired, and hungry also, to carry on the metaphor; for he has seen the postman come up the front walk a quarter of an hour since, and the letters have not been brought in yet.

At last there is a knock at the door, which he answers by a somewhat testy "come in." But he checks the coming grumble, when not the maid, but Lucia enters.

Why not grumble at Lucia? He has done so many a time.

Because she looks this morning so charming; really quite pretty again, so radiant is her face with smiles. And because, also, she holds triumphant above her head a newspaper.

She dances up to him—

"I have something for you."

"For me? Why, the post has been in this half-hour."

"Yes, for you, and that's just the reason why I kept it myself. D'ye understand my Irish reasoning?"

"No, you pretty creature," said Elsley, who saw that whatever the news was, it was good news.

"Pretty creature, am I? I was once, I know; but I thought you had forgotten all about that. But I was not going to let you have the paper till I had devoured every word of it myself first."

"Every word of what?"

"Of what you shan't have unless you promise to be good for a week. Such a Review; and from America! What a dear man he must be who wrote it! I really think I should kiss him if I met him."

"And I really think he would not say no. But as he's not here, I shall act as his proxy."

"Be quiet, and read that, if you can, for blushes;" and she spread out the paper before him, and then covered his eyes with her hands. "No, you shan't see it; it will make you vain."

Elsley had looked eagerly at the honeyed columns; (as who would not have done?) but the last word smote him. What was he thinking of? his own praise, or his wife's love?

"Too true," he cried, looking up at her. "You dear creature! Vain I am, God forgive me: but before I look at a word of this I must have a talk with you."

"I can't stop; I must run back to the children.

No; now don't look cross;" as his brow clouded, "I only said that to tease you. I'll stop with you ten whole minutes, if you won't look so very solemn and important. I hate tragedy faces. Now what is it?"

As all this was spoken while both her hands were clasped round Elsley's neck, and with looks and tones of the very sweetest as well as the very sauciest, no offence was given, and none taken: but Elsley's voice was sad as he asked,—

"So you really do care for my poems?"

"You great silly creature? Why else did I marry you at all? As if I cared for anything in the world but your poems; as if I did not love everybody who praises them; and if any stupid reviewer dares to say a word against them I could kill him on the spot. I care for nothing in the world but what people say of you.—And yet I don't care one pin; I know what your poems are, if nobody else does; and they belong to me, because you belong to me, and I must be the best judge, and care for nobody, no not I!"—And she began singing, and then hung over him, tormenting him lovingly while he read.

It was a true American review, utterly extravagant in its laudations, whether from over-kindness, or from a certain love of exaggeration and magniloquence, which makes one suspect that a large proportion of the Transatlantic gentlemen of the press must be natives of the sister isle: but it was all the more pleasant to the soul of Elsley.

"There," said Lucia, as she clung croodling to him;

"there is a pretty character of you, sir! Make the most of it, for it is all those Yankees will ever send you."

"Yes," said Elsley, "if they would send one a little money, instead of making endless dollars by printing one's books, and then a few more by praising one at a penny a line."

"That's talking like a man of business: if instead of the review, now, a cheque for fifty pounds had come, how I would have rushed out and paid the bills!"

"And liked it a great deal better than the review?"

"You jealous creature! No. If I could always have you praised, I'd live in a cabin, and go about the world barefoot, like a wild Irish girl."

"You would make a very charming one."

"I used to, once, I can tell you. Valencia and I used to run about without shoes and stockings at Kilanbaggan, and you can't think how pretty and white this little foot used to look on a nice soft carpet of green moss."

"I shall write a sonnet to it."

"You may if you choose, provided you don't publish it."

"You may trust me for that. I am not one of those who anatomise their own married happiness for the edification of the whole public, and make fame, if not money, out of their own wives' hearts."

"How I should hate you, if you did! Not that I believe their fine stories about themselves. At least,

I am certain it's only half the story. They have their quarrels, my dear, just as you and I have: but they take care not to put them into poetry."

"Well, but who could? Whether they have a right or not to publish the poetical side of their married life, it is too much to ask them to give you the unpoetical also."

"Then they are all humbugs; and I believe, if they really love their wives so very much, they would not be at all that pains to persuade the world of it."

"You are very satirical and spiteful, ma'am."

"I always am when I am pleased. If I am particularly happy, I always long to pinch somebody. I suppose it's Irish—

"'Comes out, meets a friend, and for love knocks him down.'"

"But you know, you rogue, that you care to read no poetry but love poetry."

"Of course not: every woman does; but let me find you publishing any such about me, and see what I will do to you! There, now I must go to my work, and you go and write something extra-superfinely grand, because I have been so good to you. No. Let me go; what a bother you are. Good-bye."

And away she tripped, and he returned to his work, happier than he had been for a week past.

His happiness, truly, was only on the surface. The old wound had been salved—as what wound cannot be?—by woman's love and woman's wit: but it was not healed. The cause of his wrong doing, the vain, self-indulgent spirit, was there still unchastened;

and he was destined, that very day, to find that he had still to bear the punishment of it.

Now the reader must understand, that though one may laugh at Elsley Vavasour, because it is more pleasant than scolding at him, yet have Philistia and Fogeydom neither right nor reason to consider him a despicable or merely ludicrous person, or to cry, "Ah, if he had been as we are!"

Had he been merely ludicrous, Lucia would never have married him; and he could only have been spoken of with indignation, or left utterly out of the story, as a simply unpleasant figure, beyond the purposes of a novel, though admissible now and then into tragedy. One cannot heartily laugh at a man if one has not a lurking love for him, as one really ought to have for Elsley. How much value is to be attached to his mere power of imagination and fancy, and so forth, is a question; but there was in him more than mere talent: there was, in thought at least, virtue and magnanimity.

True, the best part of him, perhaps almost all the good part of him, spent itself in words, and must be looked for, not in his life, but in his books. But in those books it can be found; and if you look through them, you will see that he has not touched upon a subject without taking, on the whole, the right, and pure, and lofty view of it. Howsoever extravagant he may be in his notions of poetic licence, that licence is never with him a synonym for licentiousness. Whatever is tender and true, whatever is chivalrous

and high-minded, he loves at first sight, and reproduces it lovingly. And it may be possible that his own estimate of his poems was not altogether wrong; that his words may have awakened here and there in others a love for that which is morally as well as physically beautiful, and may have kept alive in their hearts the recollection that, both for the bodies and the souls of men forms of life far nobler and fairer than those which we see now are possible; that they have appeared, in fragments at least, already on the earth; that they are destined, perhaps, to reappear and combine themselves in some ideal state, and in

> "One far-off divine event,
> Toward which the whole creation moves."

This is the special and proper function of the poet; that he may do this, does God touch his lips with that which, however it may be misused, is still fire from off the altar beneath which the spirits of his saints cry, — "Lord, how long?" If he "reproduce the beautiful" with this intent, however so little, then is he of the sacred guild. And because Vavasour had this gift, therefore he was a poet.

But in this he was weak: that he did not feel, or at least was forgetting fast, that this gift had been bestowed on him for any practical purpose. No one would demand that he should have gone forth with some grand social scheme, to reform a world which looked to him so mean and evil. He was not a man of business, and was not meant to be one. But it was ill for him that in his fastidiousness and touchiness he

had shut himself out from that world, till he had quite forgotten how much good there was in it as well as evil; how many people—commonplace and unpoetical it may be—but still heroical in God's sight, were working harder than he ever worked, at the divine drudgery of doing good, and that in dens of darkness and sloughs of filth from which he would have turned with disgust; so that the sympathy with the sinful and fallen which marks his earlier poems, and which perhaps verges on sentimentalism, gradually gives place to a Pharisaic and contemptuous tone; a tone more lofty and manful in seeming, but far less divine in fact. Perhaps comparative success had injured him. Whilst struggling himself against circumstances, poor, untaught, unhappy, he had more fellow-feeling, with those whom circumstance oppressed. At least, the pity which he could once bestow upon the misery which he met in his daily walks, he now kept for the more picturesque woes of Italy and Greece.

In this, too, he was weak; that he had altogether forgotten that the fire from off the altar could only be kept alight by continual self-restraint and self-sacrifice, by continual gentleness and humility, shown in the petty matters of everyday home-life; and that he who cannot rule his own household can never rule the Church of God. And so it befell, that amid the little cross-blasts of home squabbles the sacred spark was fast going out. The poems written after he settled at Penalva are marked by a less definite pur-

pose, by a lower tone of feeling: not, perhaps, by a lower moral tone; but simply by less of any moral tone at all. They are more and more full of merely sensuous beauty, mere word-painting, mere word-hunting. The desire of finding something worth saying gives place more and more to that of saying something in a new fashion. As the originality of thought (which accompanies only vigorous moral purpose) decreases, the attempt at originality of language increases. Manner, in short, has taken the place of matter. The art, it may be, of his latest poems is greatest: but it has been expended on the most unworthy themes. The later are mannered caricatures of the earlier, without their soul; and the same change seems to have passed over him which (with Mr. Ruskin's pardon) transformed the Turner of 1820 into the Turner of 1850.

Thus had Elsley transferred what sympathy he had left from needle-women and ragged schools, dwellers in Jacob's Island and sleepers in the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge, to sufferers of a more poetic class. Whether his sympathies showed thereby that he had risen or fallen, let my readers decide each for himself. It is a credit to any man to feel for any human being; and Italy, as she is at this moment, is certainly one of the most tragic spectacles which the world has ever seen. Elsley need not be blamed for pitying her; only for holding, with most of our poets, a vague notion that her woes were to be cured by a hair of the dog who bit her; viz., by homœopathic doses of

that same "art" which has been all along her morbid and self-deceiving substitute for virtue and industry. So, as she had sung herself down to the nether pit, Elsley would help to sing her up again; and had already been throwing off, ever since 1848, a series of sonnets which he entitled Eurydice, intimating, of course, that he acted as the Orpheus. Whether he had hopes of drawing iron tears down Pluto Radetzky's cheek, does not appear; but certainly the longer poem which had sprung from his fancy, at the urgent call of Messrs. Brown and Younger, would have been likely to draw nothing but iron balls from Radetzky's cannon; or failing so vast an effect, an immediate external application to the poet himself of that famous herb Pantagruelion, cure for all public ills and private woes, which men call hemp. Nevertheless, it was a noble subject; one which ought surely to have been taken up by some of our poets, for if they do not make a noble poem of it, it will be their own fault. I mean that sad and fantastic tragedy of Fra Dolcino and Margaret, which Signor Mariotti has lately given to the English public, in a book which, both for its matter and its manner, should be better known than it is. Elsley's soul had been filled (it would have been a dull one else) with the conception of the handsome and gifted patriot-monk, his soul delirious with the dream of realising a perfect Church on earth; battling with tongue and pen, and at last with sword, against the villanies of pope and kaiser, and all the old devourers of the earth, cheered only by the wild

love of her who had given up wealth, fame, friends, all which render life worth having, to die with him a death too horrible for words. And he had conceived (and not altogether ill) a vision, in which, wandering along some bright Italian bay, he met Dolcino sitting, a spirit at rest but not yet glorified, waiting for the revival of that dead land for which he had died; and Margaret by him, dipping her scorched feet for ever in the cooling wave, and looking up to the hero for whom she had given up all, with eyes of everlasting love. There they were to prophesy to him such things as seemed fit to him, of the future of Italy and of Europe, of the doom of priests and tyrants, of the sorrows and rewards of genius unappreciated and before its age; for Elsley's secret vanity could see in himself a far greater likeness to Dolcino, than Dolcino —the preacher, confessor, bender of all hearts, man of the world and man of action, at last crafty and all but unconquerable guerilla warrior—would ever have acknowledged in the self-indulgent dreamer. However, it was a fair conception enough; though perhaps it never would have entered Elsley's head, had Shelley never written the opening canto of the Revolt of Islam.

So Elsley, on a burning July forenoon, strolled up the lane and over the down to King Arthur's Nose, that he might find materials for his sea-shore scene. For he was not one of those men who live in such quiet, everyday communication with nature, that they drink in her various aspects as unconsciously as the air they breathe; and so can reproduce them, out of an

inexhaustible stock of details, simply and accurately, and yet freshly too, tinged by the peculiar hue of the mind in which they have been long sleeping. He walked the world, either blind to the beauty round him, and trying to compose instead some little scrap of beauty in his own self-imprisoned thoughts; or else he was looking out consciously and spasmodically for views, effects, emotions, images; something striking and uncommon which would suggest a poetic figure, or help out a description, or in some way re-furnish his mind with thought. From which method it befell, that his lamp of truth was too often burnt out just when it was needed; and that, like the foolish virgins, he had to go and buy oil when it was too late; or failing that, to supply its place with some baser artificial material.

That day, however, he was fortunate enough; for wandering and scrambling among the rocks, at a dead low spring tide, he came upon a spot which would have made a poem of itself better than all Elsley ever wrote, had he, forgetting all about Fra Dolcino, Italy, priests, and tyrants, set down in black and white just what he saw; provided, of course, that he had patience first to see the same.

It was none other than that ghastly chasm across which Thurnall had been so miraculously swept, on the night of his shipwreck. The same ghastly chasm: but ghastly now no longer; and as Elsley looked down, the beauty below invited him, and the coolness also; for the sun beat on the flat rock above till it scorched

the feet, and dazzled the eye, and crisped up the blackening sea-weeds; while every sea-snail crept to hide itself under the bladder-tangle, and nothing dared to peep or stir save certain grains of gunpowder, which seemed to have gone mad, so merrily did they hop about upon the surface of the fast evaporating salt-pools. That wonder, indeed, Elsley stooped to examine, and drew back his hands with an "ugh!" and a gesture of disgust, when he found that they were "nasty little insects." For Elsley held fully the poet's right to believe that all things are not very good; none, indeed, save such as suited his eclectic and fastidious taste; and to hold (on high æsthetic grounds, of course) toads and spiders in as much abhorrence as does any boarding-school girl. However, finding some rock ledges which formed a natural ladder, down he scrambled, gingerly enough, for he was neither an active nor a courageous man. But, once down, I will do him the justice to say, that for five whole minutes he forgot all about Fra Dolcino, and, what was better, about himself also.

The chasm may have been fifteen feet deep, and above, about half that breadth; but below, the waves had hollowed it into dark overhanging caverns. Just in front of him a huge boulder spanned the crack; and formed a natural doorway, through which he saw, like a picture set in a frame, the far-off blue sea softening into the blue sky among brown Eastern haze. Amid the haze a single ship hung motionless, like a white cloud. Nearer, a black cormorant floated

sleepily along, and dived, and rose again. Nearer again, long lines of flat tide-rock, glittering and quivering in the heat, sloped gradually under the waves, till they ended in half-sunken beds of olive oar-weed, which bent their tangled stems into a hundred graceful curves, and swayed to and fro slowly and sleepily. The low swell slid whispering among their floating palms, and slipped on toward the cavern's mouth, as if asking wistfully (so Elsley fancied) when it would be time for it to return to that cool shade, and hide from all the blinding blaze outside. But when his eye was enough accustomed to the shade within, it withdrew gladly from the glaring sea and glaring tide-rocks to the walls of the chasm itself; to curved and polished sheets of stone, rich brown, with snow-white veins, on which danced for ever a dappled network of pale yellow light; to crusted beds of pink coralline; to caverns, in the dark crannies of which hung branching sponges and tufts of purple sea-moss; to strips of clear white sand, bestrewn with shells; to pools, each a gay flower-garden of all hues, where branching sea-weeds reflected blue light from every point, like a thousand damasked sword-blades; while among them, dahlias and chrysanthemums, and many another mimic of our earth-born flowers, spread blooms of crimson, and purple, and lilac, and creamy grey, half-buried among feathered weeds as brightly coloured as they; and strange and gaudy fishes shot across from side to side, and chased each other in and out of hidden cells.

Within and without all was at rest; the silence

was broken only by the timid whisper of the swell, and by the chime of dropping water within some unseen cave: but what a different rest! Without, all lying breathless, stupefied, sun-stricken, in blinding glare; within, all coolness, and refreshing sleep. Without, all simple, broad, and vast; within, all various, with infinite richness of form and colour.—An Hairoun Alraschid's bower, looking out upon the—

Bother the fellow! Why will he go on analysing and figuring in this way? Why not let the blessed place tell him what it means, instead of telling it what he thinks? And—why, he is actually writing verses, though not about Fra Dolcino!

"How rests yon rock, whose half-day's bath is done,
With broad bright sight, beneath the broad bright sun,
Like sea-nymph tired, on cushioned mosses sleeping.
Yet, nearer drawn, beneath her purple tresses,
From down-bent brows we find her slowly weeping,
So many a heart for cruel man's caresses
Must only pine and pine, and yet must bear
A gallant front beneath life's gaudy glare."

Silly fellow! Do you think that Nature had time to think of such a far-fetched conceit as that while it was making that rock and peopling it with a million tiny living things, of which not one falleth to the ground without your Father's knowledge, and each more beautiful than any sea-nymph whom you ever fancied? For, after all, you cannot fancy a whole sea nymph (perhaps in that case you could make one), but only a very little scrap of her outside. Or if, as

you boast, you are inspired by the Creative Spirit, tell us what the Creative Spirit says about that rock, and not such verse as that, the lesson of which you don't yourself really feel. Pretty enough it is, perhaps: but in your haste to say a pretty thing, just because it was pretty, you have not cared to condemn yourself out of your own mouth. Why were you sulky, sir, with Mrs. Vavasour this very morning, after all that passed, because she would look over the washing-books, while you wanted her to hear about Fra Dolcino? And why, though she was up to her knees among your dirty shirts when you went out, did you not give her one parting kiss, which would have transfigured her virtuous drudgery for her into a sacred pleasure? One is heartily glad to see you disturbed, cross though you may look at it, by that sturdy step and jolly whistle which burst in on you from the other end of the chasm, as Tom Thurnall, with an old smock frock over his coat and a large basket on his arm, comes stumbling and hopping towards you, dropping every now and then on hands and knees, and turning over on his back, to squeeze his head into some muddy crack, and then withdraw it with the salt water dripping down his nose.

Elsley closed his eyes, and rested his head on his hand in a somewhat studied "pose." But as he wished not to be interrupted, it may not have been altogether unpardonable to pretend sleep. However, the sleeping posture had exactly the opposite effect to that which he designed.

"Ah, Mr. Vavasour!"

"Humph!" quoth he slowly, if not sulkily.

"I admire your taste, sir; a charming summer-house old Triton has vacated for your use; but let me advise you not to go to sleep in it."

"Why then, sir?"

"Because—It's no business of mine, of course: but the tide has turned already; and if a breeze springs up old Triton will be back again in a hurry, and in a rage also; and—I may possibly lose a good patient."

Elsley, who knew nothing about the tides, save that "the moon wooed the ocean," or some such important fact, thanked him coolly enough, and returned to a meditative attitude. Tom saw that he was in the seventh heaven, and went on: but he had not gone three steps before he pulled up short, slapping his hands together once, as a man does who has found what he wants; and then plunged up to his knees in a rock pool, and then began working very gently at something under water.

Elsley watched him for full five minutes with so much curiosity, that, despite of himself, he asked him what he was doing.

Tom had his whole face under water, and did not hear, till Elsley had repeated the question.

"Only a rare zoophyte," said he at last, lifting his dripping visage, and gasping for breath; and then he dived again.

"Inexplicable pedantry of science!" thought Elsley to himself, while Tom worked on steadfastly, and at

last rose, and, taking out a phial from his basket, was about to deposit in it something invisible.

"Stay a moment; you really have roused my curiosity by your earnestness. May I see what it is for which you have taken so much trouble?"

Tom held out on his finger a piece of slimy crust the size of a halfpenny. Elsley could only shrug his shoulders.

"Nothing to you, sir, I doubt not; but worth a guinea to me, even if it be only to mount bits of it as microscopic objects."

"So you mingle business with science?" said Elsley, rather in a contemptuous tone.

"Why not? I must live, and my father too; and it is as honest a way of making money as any other: I poach in no man's manor for my game."

"But what is your game! What possible attraction in that bit of dirt can make men spend their money on it?"

"You shall see," said Tom, dropping it into the phial of salt water, and offering it to Elsley, with his pocket magnifier.

"Judge for yourself."

Elsley did so, and beheld a new wonder—a living plant of crystal, studded with crystal bells, from each of which waved a crown of delicate arms. It was the first time that Elsley had ever seen one of those exquisite zoophytes which stud every rock and every tuft of weed.

"This is most beautiful," said he at length.

"Humph! why should not Mr. Vavasour write a poem about it?"

"Why not indeed?" thought Elsley.

"It's no business of mine, no man's less: but I often wonder why you poets don't take to the microscope, and tell us a little more about the wonderful things which are here already, and not about those which are not, and which, perhaps, never will be."

"Well," said Elsley, after another look: "but, after all, these things have no human interest in them."

"I don't know that; they have to me, for instance. These are the things which I would write about if I had any turn for verse, not about human nature, of which I know, I'm afraid, a little too much already. I always like to read old 'Darwin's Loves of the Plants;' bosh as it is in a scientific point of view, it amuses one's fancy without making one lose one's temper, as one must when one begins to analyse the microscopic ape called self and friends.

"You would like, then, the old Cosmogonies, the Eddas and the Vedas," said Elsley, getting interested, as most people did after five minutes' talk with the cynical doctor. "I suppose you would not say much for their science; but, as poetry, they are just what you ask for—the expression of thoughtful spirits, who looked round upon nature with awe-struck, child-like eyes, and asked of all heaven and earth the question, 'What are you? How came you to be?' Yet—it may be my fault—while I admire them, I

cannot sympathise with them. To me, this zoophyte is as a being of another sphere; and till I can create some link in my own mind between it and humanity it is as nothing in my eyes."

"There is link enough, sir, don't doubt, and chains of iron and brass too."

"You believe then, in the development theory of the 'Vestiges'?"

"Doctors who have their bread to earn never commit themselves to theories. No; all I meant was, that this little zoophyte lives by the same laws as you and I; and that he, and the sea-weeds, and so forth, teach us doctors certain little rules concerning life and death, which you will have a chance soon of seeing at work on the most grand and poetical, and indeed altogether tragic scale."

"What do you mean?"

"When the cholera comes here as it will, at its present pace, before the end of the summer, then I shall have the zoophytes rising up in judgment against me, if I have not profited by a leaf out of their book."

"The cholera?" said Elsley in a startled voice, forgetting Tom's parables in the new thought. For Elsley had a dread more nervous than really coward of infectious diseases; and he had also (and prided himself, too, on having) all Goethe's dislike of anything terrible or horrible, of sickness, disease, wounds, death, anything which jarred with that "beautiful" which was his idol.

"The cholera?" repeated he. "I hope not; I wish you had not mentioned it, Mr. Thurnall."

"I am very sorry that I did so, if it offends you. I had thought that forewarned was forearmed. After all it is no business of mine; if I have extra labour, as I shall have, I shall have extra experience; and that will be a fair set-off, even if the board of guardians don't vote me an extra remuneration, as they ought to do."

Elsley was struck dumb; first by the certainty which Tom's words expressed, and next by the coolness of their temper. At last he stammered out, "Good heavens, Mr. Thurnall! you do not talk of that frightful scourge—so disgusting, too, in its character—as a matter of profit and loss? It is sordid, cold-hearted!"

"My dear sir, if I let myself think, much more talk, about the matter in any other tone, I should face the thing poorly enough when it came. I shall have work enough to keep my head about the end of August or beginning of September, and I must not lose it beforehand, by indulging in any horror, disgust, or other emotion perfectly justifiable in a layman."

"But are not doctors men?"

"That depends very much on what 'a man' means."

"Men with human sympathy and compassion."

"Oh, I mean by a man, a man with human strength. My dear sir, one may be too busy, and at doing good too (though that is not my line, save professionally,

because it is my only way of earning money); but one may be too busy at doing good to have time for compassion. If while I was cutting a man's leg off I thought of the pain which he was suffering——"

"Thank heaven!" said Elsley, "that it was not my lot to become a medical man."

Tom looked at him with the quaintest smile: a flush of mingled anger and contempt had been rising in him as he heard the ex-bottle-boy talking sentiment: but he only went on quietly,

"No, sir; with your more delicate sensibilities, you may thank Heaven that you did not become a medical man; your life would have been one of torture, disgust, and agonising sense of responsibility. But do you not see that you must thank Heaven for the sufferer's sake also? I will not shock you again by talking of amputation; but even in the smallest matter—even if you were merely sending medicine to an old maid—suppose that your imagination were preoccupied by the thought of her old age, her sufferings, her disappointed hopes, her regretful dream of bygone youth, and beauty, and love, and all the tender fancies which might well spring out of such a mournful spectacle, would you not be but too likely (pardon the bathos) to end by sending her an elderly gentleman's medicine after all, and so either frightfully increasing her sufferings, or ending them once for all?"

Tom said this in the most quiet and natural tone, without even a twinkle of his wicked eye: but Elsley heard him begin with reddening face; and as he

went on, the red had turned to purple, and then to deadly yellow; till making a half-step forward he cried fiercely:—

"Sir!" and then stopped suddenly; for his feet slipped upon the polished stone, and on his face he fell into the pool at Thurnall's feet.

"Well for both of us geese!" said Tom inwardly, as he went to pick him up. "I verily believe he was going to strike me, and that would have done for neither of us. I was a fool to say it; but the temptation was so exquisite; and it must have come some day."

But Vavasour staggered up of his own accord, and dashing away Tom's proffered hand, was rushing off without a word.

"Not so, Mr. John Briggs!" said Tom, making up his mind in a moment that he must have it out now, or never; and that he might have everything to fear from Vavasour if he let him go home furious. We do not part thus, sir!"

"We will meet again, if you will," foamed Vavasour, "but it shall end in the death of one of us!"

"By each other's potions? I can doctor myself, sir, thank you. Listen to me, John Briggs! You shall listen!" and Tom sprang past him, and planted himself at the foot of the rock steps, to prevent his escaping upward.

"What, do you wish to quarrel with me, sir? It is I who ought to quarrel with you. I am the

aggrieved party, and not you, sir! I have not seen the son of the man who, when I was an apothecary's boy, petted me, lent me books, introduced me as a genius, turned my head for me, which was just what I was vain enough to enjoy—I have not seen that man's son cast ashore penniless and friendless, and yet never held out to him a helping hand, but tried to conceal my identity from him, from a dirty shame of my honest father's honest name."

Vavasour dropped his eyes, for was it not true? but he raised them again more fiercely than ever.

"Curse you! I owe you nothing. It was you who made me ashamed of it. You rhymed on it, and laughed about poetry coming out of such a name."

"And what if I did? Are poets to be made of nothing but tinder and gall? Why could you not take an honest joke as it was meant, and go your way like other people, till you had shown yourself worth something, and won honour even, for the name of Briggs?"

"And I have! I have my own station now, my own fame, sir, and it is nothing to you what I choose to call myself. I have won my place, I say, and your mean envy cannot rob me of it."

"You have your station. Very good," said Tom, not caring to notice the imputation; "you owe the greater part of it to your having made a most fortunate marriage, for which I respect you, as a practical man. Let your poetry be what it may (and people tell me that it is really very beautiful), your match shows me

that you are a clever, and therefore a successful person."

"Do you take me for a sordid schemer, like yourself? I loved what was worthy of me, and won it because I deserved it."

"Then, having won it, treat it as it deserves," said Tom, with a cool searching look, before which Vavasour's eyes fell again. "Understand me, Mr. John Briggs; it is of no consequence to me what you call yourself: but it is of consequence to me that I should not have a patient in my parish whom I cannot cure; for I cannot cure broken hearts, though they will be simple enough to come to me for medicine."

"You shall have no chance! You shall never enter my house! You shall not ruin me, sir, by your bills!"

Tom made no answer to this fresh insult. He had another game to play.

"Take care what you say, Briggs; remember that, after all, you are in my power, and I had better remind you plainly of the fact."

"And you mean to make me your tool? I will die first!"

"I believe that," said Tom, who was very near adding, "that he should be sorry to work with such tools."

"My tools are my lancet and my drugs," said he, quietly, "and all I have to say refers to them. It suits my purpose to become the principal medical man in this neighbourhood——"

"And I am to tout for introductions for you?"

"You are to be so very kind as to allow me to finish my sentence, just as you would allow any other gentleman; and because I wish for practice, and patients, and power, you will be so kind as to treat me henceforth as one high-minded man would treat another, to whom he is obliged. For you know, John Briggs, as well as I," said Tom, drawing himself up to his full height, "look me in the face, if you can, ere you deny it, that I was, while you knew me, as honourable a man, and as kind-hearted a man, as you ever were; and that now—considering the circumstances under which we meet,—you have more reason to trust me, than I have, prima facie, to trust you."

Vavasour answered not a word.

"Good-bye, then," said Tom, drawing aside from the step; "Mrs. Vavasour will be anxious about you. And mind! With regard to her first of all, sir, and then with regard to other matters—as long, and only as long, as you remember that you are John Briggs of Whitbury, I shall be the first to forget it. There is my hand, for old acquaintance' sake."

Vavasour took the proffered hand coldly, paused a moment, and then wrung it in silence, and hurried away home.

"Have I played my ace ill after all?" said Tom, sitting down to consider. "As for whether I should have played it all, that's no business of mine now. Madam Might-have-been may see to that. But did I play ill? for if I did, I may try a new lead yet.

Ought I to have twitted him about his wife? If he's venomous, it may only make matters worse; and still worse if he be suspicious. I don't think he was either in old times; but vanity will make a man so, and it may have made him. Well, I must only ingratiate myself all the more with her; and find out, too, whether she has his secret as well as I. What I am most afraid of is my having told him plainly that he was in my power; it's apt to make sprats of his size flounce desperately, in the mere hope of proving themselves whales after all, if it's only to their miserable selves. Never mind; he can't break my tackle; and besides, that gripe of the hand seemed to indicate that the poor wretch was beat, and thought himself let off easily—as indeed he is. We'll hope so. Now, zoophytes, for another turn with you!"

To tell the truth, however, Tom is looking for more than zoophytes, and has been doing so at every dead low tide since he was wrecked. He has heard nothing yet of his belt. The notes have not been presented at the London bank; nobody in the village has been spending more money than usual; for cunning Tom has contrived already to know how many pints of ale every man of whom he has the least doubt has drunk. Perhaps, after all, the belt may have been torn off in the life struggle; it may have been for a moment in Grace's hands, and then have been swept into the sea. What more likely? And what more likely, in that case, that, sinking by its weight, it is wedged away in some cranny of the rocks?

So spring-tide after spring-tide Tom searches, and all the more carefully because others are searching too, for waifs and strays from the wreck. Sad relics of mortality he finds at times, as others do: once, even, a dressing-case, full of rings and pins and chains, which belonged, he fancied, to a gay young bride with whom he had waltzed many a time on deck, as they slipped along before the soft trade-wind: but no belt. He sent the dressing-case to the Lloyd's underwriters, and searched on: but in vain. Neither could he find that any one else had forestalled him; and that very afternoon, sulky and disheartened, he determined to waste no more time about the matter, and strode home, vowing signal vengeance against the thief, if he caught him.

"And I will catch him! These west-country yokels, to fancy that they can do Tom Thurnall! It's adding insult to injury, as Sam Weller's parrot has it."

Now his shortest way home lay across the shore, and then along the beach, and up the steps by the little waterfall, past Mrs. Harvey's door; and at that door sat Grace, sewing in the sun. She looked up and bowed as he passed, smiling modestly, and little dreaming of what was passing in his mind; and when a very lovely girl smiled and bowed to Tom, he must needs do the same to her: whereon she added,—

"I beg your pardon, sir: have you heard anything of the money you lost? I—we—have been so ashamed to think of such a thing happening here."

Tom's evil spirit was roused.

"Have *you* heard anything of it, Miss Harvey? For you seem to me the only person in the place who knows anything about the matter."

"I, sir?" cried Grace, fixing her great startled eyes full on him.

"Why, ma'am," said Tom, with a courtly smile, "you may possibly recollect, if you will so far tax your memory, that you had it in your hands at least a moment, when you did me the kindness to save my life; and as you were kind enough to inform me that I should recover it when I was worthy of it, I suppose I have not yet risen in your eyes to the required state of conversion and regeneration." And swinging impatiently away, he walked on, really afraid lest he should say something rude.

Grace half called after him, and then suddenly checking herself, rushed in to her mother with a wild and pale face.

"What is this Mr. Thurnall has been saying to me about his belt and money which he lost?"

"About what? Has he been rude to you, the bad man?" cried Mrs. Harvey, dropping the pie-dish in some confusion, and taking a long while to pick up the pieces.

"About the belt—the money which he lost? Why don't you speak, mother?"

"Belt—money? Ah, I recollect now. He has lost some money, he says."

"Of course he has."

"How should you know anything? I recollect there was some talk of it, though. But what matter what he says? He was quite passed away, I'll swear, when they carried him up."

"But, mother! mother! he says that I know about it; that I had it in my hands!"

"You? Oh the wicked wretch, the false, ungrateful, slanderous child of wrath, with adder's poison under his lips! No, my child! Though we're poor, we're honest! Let him slander us, rob us, of our good name, send us to prison, if he will—he cannot rob us of our souls. We'll be silent; we'll turn the other cheek, and commit our cause to One above who pleads for the orphan and the widow. We will not strive nor cry, my child. Oh, no!" And Mrs. Harvey began fussing over the smashed pie-dish.

"I shall not strive nor cry, mother," said Grace, who had recovered her usual calm: "but he must have some cause for these strange words. Do you recollect seeing me with the belt?"

"Belt, what's a belt? I know nothing about belts. I tell you he's a villain, and a slanderer. Oh, that it should have come to this, to have my child's fair fame blasted by a wretch that comes nobody knows where from, and has been doing nobody knows what, for aught I know!"

"Mother, mother! we know no harm of him. If he is mistaken, God forgive him!"

"If he is mistaken?" went on Mrs. Harvey, still over the pie-dish: but Grace gave her no answer.

She was deep in thought. She recollected now, that as she had gone up the path from the cove on that eventful morning, she had seen Willis and Thurnall whispering earnestly together; and she recollected now, for the first time, that there had been a certain sadness and perplexity, almost reserve, about Willis ever since. Good Heavens! could he suspect her too? She would find out that at least; and no sooner had her mother fussed away, talking angrily to herself, into the back kitchen, than Grace put on her bonnet and shawl, and went forth to find the Captain.

In an hour she returned. Her lips were firm set, her cheeks pale, her eyes red with weeping. She said nothing to her mother, who for her part did not seem inclined to allude again to the matter

"Where have you been, child? You look quite poorly, and your eyes red."

"The wind is very cold, mother," said she, and went into her room. Her mother looked sharply after her, and muttered to herself

Grace went in, and sat down on the bed.

"What a coldness this is at my heart!" she said aloud to herself, trying to smile; but she could not: and she sat on the bedside, without taking off her bonnet and shawl, her hands hanging listlessly by her side, her head drooping on her bosom, till her mother called her to tea: then she was forced to rouse herself, and went out, composed, but utterly wretched.

Tom walked up homeward, very ill at ease. He had played, to use his nomenclature, two trump cards

running, and was by no means satisfied that he had played them well. He had no right, certainly, to be satisfied with either move; for both had been made in a somewhat evil spirit, and certainly for no very disinterested end.

That was a view of the matter, however, which never entered his mind; there was only that general dissatisfaction with himself which is, though men try hard to deny the fact, none other than the supernatural sting of conscience. He tried "to lay to his soul the flattering unction" that he might, after all, be of use to Mrs. Vavasour, by using his power over her husband: but he knew in his secret heart that any move of his in that direction was likely only to make matters worse; that to-day's explosion might only have sent home the hapless Vavasour in a more irritable temper than ever. And thinking over many things, backward and forward, he saw his own way so little, that he actually condescended to go and "pump" Frank Headley. So he termed it: but, after all, it was only like asking advice of a good man, because he did not feel himself quite good enough to advise himself.

The curate was preparing to sally forth, after his frugal dinner. The morning he spent at the schools, or in parish secularities; the afternoon, till dusk, was devoted to visiting the poor; the night, not to sleep, but to reading and sermon writing. Thus, by sitting up till two in the morning, and rising again at six for his private devotions, before walking a mile and a half up to church for the morning service, Frank

Headley burnt the candle of life at both ends very effectually, and showed that he did so by his pale cheeks and red eyes.

"Ah!" said Tom, as he entered. "As usual: poor Nature is being robbed and murdered by rich Grace."

"What do you mean now?" asked Frank, smiling, for he had become accustomed enough to Tom's quaint parables, though he had to scold him often enough for their irreverence.

"Nature says, 'after dinner sit awhile;' and even the dumb animals hear her voice, and lie by for a siesta when their stomachs are full. Grace says, 'Jump up and rush out the moment you have swallowed your food; and if you get an indigestion, abuse poor Nature for it; and lay the blame on Adam's fall.'"

"You are irreverent, my good sir, as usual; but you are unjust also this time."

"How then?"

"Unjust to Grace, as you phrase it," answered Frank, with a quaint sad smile. "I assure you on my honour, that Grace has nothing whatsoever to do with my 'rushing out' just now, but simply the desire to do my good works that they may be seen of men. I hate going out. I should like to sit and read the whole afternoon: but I am afraid lest the dissenters should say, 'He has not been to see so-and-so for the last three days;' so off I go, and no credit to me."

Why had Frank dared, upon a month's acquaintance, to lay bare his own heart thus to a man of no

creed at all? Because, I suppose, amid all differences, he had found one point of likeness between himself and Thurnall; he had found that Tom at heart was a truly genuine man, sincere and faithful to his own scheme of the universe.

How that man, through all his eventful life, had been enabled to

> "Bate not a jot of heart or hope,
> But steer right onward,"

was a problem which Frank longed curiously, and yet fearfully withal, to solve. There were many qualities in him which Frank could not but admire, and long to imitate; and, "Whence had they come?" was another problem at which he looked, trembling as many a new thought crossed him. He longed, too, to learn from Tom somewhat at least of that savoir faire, that power of "becoming all things to all men," which St. Paul had; and for want of which Frank had failed. He saw, too, with surprise, that Tom had gained in one month more real insight into the characters of his parishioners than he had done in twelve; and besides all, there was the craving of the lonely heart for human confidence and friendship. So it befell that Frank spoke out his inmost thought that day, and thought no shame; and it befell also, that Thurnall, when he heard it, said in his heart—

"What a noble, honest fellow you are, when you——"

But he answered enigmatically.

"Oh, I quite agree with you that Grace has nothing

to do with it. I only referred it to that source because I thought you would do so."

"You ought to be ashamed of your dishonesty, then."

"I know it; but my view of the case is, that you rush out after dinner for the very same reason that the Yankee storekeeper does—from—You'll forgive me if I say it?"

"Of course. You cannot speak too plainly to me."

"Conceit; the Yankee fancies himself such an important person, that the commercial world will stand still unless he flies back to its help after ten minutes' gobbling, with his mouth full of pork and pickled peaches. And you fancy yourself so important in your line, that the spiritual world will stand still unless you bolt back to help it in like wise. Substitute a half-cooked mutton chop for the pork, and the cases are exact parallels."

"Your parallel does not hold good, Doctor. The Yankee goes back to his store to earn money for himself, and not to keep commerce alive."

"While you go for utterly disinterested motives.—I see."

"Do you?" said Frank. "If you think that I fancy myself a better man than the Yankee, you mistake me: but at least you will confess that I am not working for money."

"No; you have your notions of reward, and he has his. He wants to be paid by material dollars,

payable next month; you by spiritual dollars, payable when you die. I don't see the great difference."

"Only the slight difference between what is material and what is spiritual."

"They seem to me, from all I can hear in pulpits, to be only two different sorts of pleasant things, and to be sought after, both alike, simply because they are pleasant. Self-interest, if you will forgive me, seems to me the spring of both: only, to do you justice, you are a farther-sighted and more prudent man than the Yankee storekeeper; and having more exquisitely developed notions of what your true self-interest is, are content to wait a little longer than he."

"You stab with a jest, Thurnall. You little know how your words hit home."

"Well, then, to turn from a matter of which I know nothing—I must keep you in, and give you parish business to do at home. I am come to consult you as my spiritual pastor and master."

Frank looked a little astonished.

"Don't be alarmed. I am not going to confess my own sins—only other people's."

"Pray don't, then. I know far more of them already than I can cure. I am worn out with the daily discovery of fresh evil wherever I go."

"Then why not comfort yourself by trying to find a little fresh good wherever you go?"

Frank sighed.

"Perhaps, though, you don't care for any sort of good except your own sort of good. You are

fastidious. Well, you have your excuses. But you can understand a poor fellow like me, who has been dragged through the slums and sewers of this wicked world for fifteen years and more, being very well content with any sort of good which I can light on, and not particular as to either quantity or quality."

"Perhaps yours is the healthier state of mind; if you can only find the said good. The vulturine nose, which smells nothing but corruption, is no credit to its possessor. And it would be pleasant, at least, to find good in every man."

"One can't do that in one's study. Mixing with them is the only plan. No doubt they're inconsistent enough. The more you see of them, the less you trust them; and yet the more you see of them, the more you like them. Can you solve that paradox from your books?"

"I will try," said Frank. "I generally have more than one to think over when you go. But, surely, there are men so fallen that they are utterly insensible to good."

"Very likely. There's no saying in this world what may not be. Only I never saw one. I'll tell you a story: you may apply it as you like. When I was on the Texan expedition, and raw to soldiering and camping, we had to sleep in low ground, and suffered terribly from a miasma. Deadly cold, it was, when it came; and the man who once got chilled through with it, just died. I was lying on the bare ground one night, and chilly enough I was—for I was

short of clothes, and had lost my buffalo robe—but fell asleep: and on waking the next morning, I found myself covered up in my comrade's blankets, even to his coat, while he was sitting shivering in his shirt sleeves. The cold fog had come down in the night, and the man had stripped himself, and sat all night with death staring him in the face, to save my life. And all the reason he gave was, that if one of us must die, it was better the older should go first, and not a youngster like me. And," said Tom, lowering his voice, "that man was a murderer!"

"A murderer!"

"Yes; a drunken, gambling, cut-throat rowdy as ever grew ripe for the gallows. Now, will you tell me that there was nothing in that man but what the devil put there?"

Frank sat meditating awhile on this strange story, which is moreover a true one; and then looked up with something like tears in his eyes.

"And he did not die?"

"Not he! I saw him die afterwards—shot through the heart, without time even to cry out. But I have not forgotten what he did for me that night; and I'll tell you what, sir! I do not believe that God has forgotten it either."

Frank was silent for a few moments, and then Tom changed the subject.

"I want to know what you can tell me about this Mr. Vavasour."

"Hardly anything, I am sorry to say. I was at

his house at tea, two or three times, when I first came; and I had very agreeable evenings, and talks on art and poetry: but I believe I offended him by hinting that he ought to come to church, which he never does, and since then our acquaintance has all but ceased. I suppose you will say, as usual, that I played my cards badly there also."

"Not at all," said Tom, who was disposed to take any one's part against Elsley. If a clergyman has not a right to tell a man that, I don't see what right he has of any kind. Only," added he, with one of his quaint smiles, "the clergyman, if he compels a man to deal at his store, is bound to furnish him with the articles which he wants."

"Which he needs, or which he likes? For 'wanting' has both these meanings."

"With something that he finds by experience does him good; and so learns to like it, because he knows that he needs it, as my patients do my physic."

"I wish my patients would do so by mine: but, unfortunately, half of them seem to me not to know what their disease is, and the other half do not think they are diseased at all."

"Well," said Tom drily, "perhaps some of them are more right than you fancy. Every man knows his own business best."

"If it were so, they would go about it somewhat differently from what most of the poor creatures do."

"Do you think so. I fancy myself that not one of them does a wrong thing, but what he knows it to be

wrong just as well as you do, and is much more ashamed and frightened about it already, than you can ever make him by preaching at him."

"Do you?"

"I do. I judge of others by myself."

"Then would you have a clergyman never warn his people of their sins?"

"If I were he, I'd much sooner take the sins for granted, and say to them, 'Now, my friends, I know you are all, ninety-nine out of the hundred of you, not such bad fellows at bottom, and would all like to be good, if you only knew how; so I'll tell you as far as I know, though I don't know much about the matter. For the truth is, you must have a hundred troubles every day which I never felt in my life; and it must be a very hard thing to keep body and soul together, and to get a little pleasure on this side the grave without making blackguards of yourselves. Therefore I don't pretend to set myself up as a better or a wiser man than you at all: but I do know a thing or two which I fancy may be useful to you. You can but try it. So come up, if you like, any of you, and talk matters over with me as between gentleman and gentleman. I shall keep your secret, of course; and if you find I can't cure your complaint, why, you can but go away and try elsewhere.'"

"And so the doctor's model sermon ends in proposing private confession!"

"Of course. The thing itself which will do them good, without the red rag of an official name, which

sends them cackling off like frightened turkeys.—Such private confession as is going on between you and me now. Here am I confessing to you all my unorthodoxy."

"And I my ignorance," said Frank; "for I really believe you know more about the matter than I do."

"Not at all. I may be all wrong. But the fault of your cloth seems to me to be that they apply their medicines without deigning, most of them, to take the least diagnosis of the case. How could I cure a man without first examining what was the matter with him?"

"So say the old casuists, of whom I have read enough—some would say too much; but they do not satisfy me. They deal with actions, and motives, and so forth; but they do not go down to the one root of wrong which is the same in every man."

"You are getting beyond me: but why do you not apply a little of the worldly wisdom which these same casuists taught you?"

"To tell you the truth, I have tried in past years, and found that the medicine would not act."

"Humph! Well, that would depend, again, on the previous diagnosis of human nature being correct; and those old monks, I should say, would know about as much of human nature as so many daws in a steeple. Still, you wouldn't say that what was the matter with old Heale was the matter also with Vavasour?"

"I believe from my heart that it is."

"Humph! Then you know the symptoms of his complaint?"

"I know that he never comes to church."

"Nothing more? I am really speaking in confidence. You surely have heard of disagreements between him and Mrs. Vavasour?"

"Never, I assure you; you shock me."

"I am exceedingly sorry, then, that I said a word about it: but the whole parish talks of it," answered Tom, who was surprised at this fresh proof of the little confidence which Aberalva put in their parson.

"Ah!" said Frank sadly, "I am the last person in the parish to hear any news: but this is very distressing."

"Very, to me. My honour, to tell you the truth, as a medical man, is concerned in the matter; for she is growing quite ill from unhappiness, and I cannot cure her; so I come to you, as soul-doctor, to do what I, the body-doctor, cannot."

Frank sat pondering for a minute, and then—

"You set me on a task for which I am as little fit as any man, by your own showing. What do I know of disagreements between man and wife? And one has a delicacy about offering her comfort. She must bestow her confidence on me before I can use it: while he——"

"While he, as the cause of the disease, is what you ought to treat; and not her unhappiness, which is only a symptom of it."

"Spoken like a wise doctor: but to tell you the

truth, Thurnall, I have no influence over Mr. Vavasour, and see no means of getting any. If he recognised my authority, as his parish priest, then I should see my way. Let him be as bad as he might, I should have a fixed point from which to work; but with his free-thinking notions, I know well—one can judge it too easily from his poems—he would look on me as a pedant assuming a spiritual tyranny to which I have no claim."

Tom sat awhile nursing his knee, and then——

"If you saw a man fallen into the water, what do you think would be the shortest way to prove to him that you had authority from heaven to pull him out? Do you give it up? Pulling him out would it not be, without more ado?"

"I should be happy enough to pull poor Vavasour out, if he would let me. But till he believes that I can do it, how can I even begin!"

"How can you expect him to believe, if he has no proof?"

"There are proofs enough in the Bible and elsewhere, if he will but accept them. If he refuses to examine into the credentials, the fault is his, not mine. I really do not wish to be hard; but would not you do the same, if any one refused to employ you, because he chose to deny that you were a legally qualified practitioner?"

"Not so badly put; but what should I do in that case? Go on quietly curing his neighbours, till he began to alter his mind as to my qualifications, and

came in to be cured himself. But here's this difference between you and me. I am not bound to attend to any one who don't send for me; while you think that you are, and carry the notion a little too far, for I expect you to kill yourself by it some day."

"Well?" said Frank, with something of that lazy Oxford tone, which is intended to save the speaker the trouble of giving his arguments, when he has already made up his mind, or thinks that he has so done.

"Well, if I thought myself bound to doctor the man, willy-nilly, as you do, I would certainly go to him, and show him, at least, that I understood his complaint. That would be the first step towards his letting me cure him. How else on earth do you fancy that Paul cured those Corinthians about whom I have been reading lately?"

"Are you, too, going to quote Scripture against me? I am glad to find that your studies extend to St. Paul."

"To tell you the truth, your sermon last Sunday puzzled me. I could not comprehend (on your showing) how Paul got that wonderful influence over those pagans which he evidently had; and as how to get influence is a very favourite study of mine, I borrowed the book when I went home, and read for myself; and the matter at last seemed clear enough, on Paul's own showing."

"I don't doubt that: but I suspect your interpretation of the fact and mine would not agree."

"Mine is simple enough. He says that what proved him to be an apostle was his power. He is continually appealing to his power; and what can he mean by that, but that he could do, and had done, what he professed to do? He promised to make those poor heathen rascals of Greeks better, and wiser, and happier men; and, I suppose, he made them so; and then there was no doubt of his commission, or his authority, or anything else. He says himself he did not require any credentials, for they were his credentials, read and known of every one; he had made good men of them out of bad ones, and that was proof enough whose apostle he was."

"Well," said Frank half sadly, "I might say a great deal, of course, on the other side of the question, but I prefer hearing what you laymen think about it all."

"Will you be angry if I tell you honestly?"

"Did you ever find me angry at anything you said?"

"No. I will do you the justice to say that. Well, what we laymen say is this. If the parsons have the authority of which they boast, why don't they use it? If they have commission to make bad people good, they must have power too; for He whose commission they claim, is not likely, I should suppose, to set a man to do what he cannot do."

"And we can do it, if people would but submit to us. It all comes round again to the same point."

"So it does. How to get them to listen. I tried

to find out how Paul achieved that first step; and when I looked he told me plainly enough. By becoming all things to all men; by showing these people that he understood them, and knew what was the matter with them. Now do you go and do likewise by Vavasour, and then exercise your authority like a practical man. If you have power to bind and loose, as you told us last Sunday, bind that fellow's ungovernable temper, and loose him from the real slavery which he is in to his miserable conceit and self-indulgence! and then if he does not believe in your 'sacerdotal power,' he is even a greater fool than I take him for."

"Honestly, I will try: God help me!" added Frank in a lower voice; "but as for quarrels between man and wife, as I told you, no one understands them less than I."

"Then marry a wife yourself and quarrel a little with her for experiment, and then you'll know all about it."

Frank laughed in spite of himself.

"Thank you. No man is less likely to try that experiment than I."

"Hum!"

"I have quite enough as a bachelor to distract me from my work, without adding to them those of a wife and family, and those little home lessons in the frailty of human nature, in which you advise me to copy Mr. Vavasour."

"And so," said Tom, "having to doctor human

beings, nineteen-twentieths of whom are married; and being aware that three parts of the miseries of human life come either from wanting to be married, or from married cares and troubles—you think that you will improve your chance of doctoring your flock rightly by avoiding carefully the least practical acquaintance with the chief cause of their disease. Philosophical and logical, truly!"

"You seem to have acquired a little knowledge of men and women, my good friend, without encumbering yourself with a wife and children."

"Would you like to go to the same school to which I went?" asked Thurnall, with a look of such grave meaning that Frank's pure spirit shuddered within him. "And I'll tell you this; whenever I see a woman nursing her baby, or a father with his child upon his knees, I say to myself—they know more, at this minute, of human nature, as of the great law of 'C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour, which makes the world go round,' than I am likely to do for many a day. I'll tell you what, sir! These simple natural ties, which are common to us and the dumb animals, —as I live, sir, they are the divinest things I see in the world! I have but one, and that is love to my poor old father; that's all the religion I have as yet: but I tell you, it alone has kept me from being a ruffian and a blackguard. And I'll tell you more," said Tom, warming, "of all diabolical dodges for preventing the parsons from seeing who they are, or what human beings are, or what their work in the world is,

or anything else, the neatest is that celibacy of the clergy. I should like to have you with me in Spanish America, or in France either, and see what you thought of it then. How it ever came into mortal brains is to me the puzzle. I've often fancied, when I've watched those priests—and very good fellows, too, some of them are—that there must be a devil after all abroad in the world, as you say; for no human insanity could ever have hit upon so complete and 'cute a device for making parsons do the more harm, the more good they try to do. There, I've preached you a sermon, and made you angry."

"Not in the least: but I must go now and see some sick."

"Well, go, and prosper; only recollect that the said sick are men and women."

And away Tom went, thinking to himself: "Well, that is a noble, straightforward, honest fellow, and will do yet, if he'll only get a wife. He's not one of those asses who have made up their minds by book that the world is square, and won't believe it to be round for any ocular demonstration. He'll find out what shape the world is before long, and behave as such, and act accordingly."

Little did Tom think, as he went home that day in full-blown satisfaction with his sermon to Frank, of the misery he had caused, and was going to cause for many a day, to poor Grace Harvey. It was a rude shock to her to find herself thus suspected; though perhaps it was one which she needed. She had

never, since one first trouble ten years ago, known any real grief; and had therefore had all the more time to make a luxury of unreal ones. She was treated by the simple folk around her as all but inspired; and being possessed of real powers as miraculous in her own eyes as those which were imputed to her were in theirs (for what are real spiritual experiences but daily miracles?) she was just in that temper of mind in which she required, as ballast, all her real goodness, lest the moral balance should topple headlong after the intellectual, and the downward course of vanity, excitement, deception, blasphemous assumptions be entered on. Happy for her that she was in Protestant and common-sense England, and in a country parish, where mesmerism and spirit-rapping were unknown. Had she been an American, she might have become one of the most lucrative "mediums;" had she been born in a Romish country, she would have probably become an even more famous personage. There is no reason why she should not have equalled or surpassed, the ecstasies of St. Theresa, or of St. Hildegardis, or any other sweet dreamer of sweet dreams; have founded a new order of charity, have enriched the clergy of a whole province, and have died in seven years, maddened by alternate paroxysms of self-conceit and revulsions of self-abasement. Her own preachers and class-leaders, indeed (so do extremes meet), would not have been sorry to make use of her in somewhat the same manner, however feebly and coarsely: but her innate

self-respect and modesty had preserved her from the snares of such clumsy poachers; and more than one good-looking young preacher had fled desperately from a station where, instead of making a tool of Grace Harvey, he could only madden his own foolish heart with love for her.

So Grace had reigned upon her pretty little throne of not unbearable sorrows, till a real and bitter woe came; one which could not be hugged and cherished, like the rest; one which she tried to fling from her, angrily, scornfully, and found to her horror, that, instead of her possessing it, it possessed her, and coiled itself round her heart, and would not be flung away. She—she, of all beings, to be suspected as a thief, and by the very man whose life she had saved! She was willing enough to confess herself—and confessed herself night and morning—a miserable sinner, and her heart a cage of unclean birds, deceitful, and desperately wicked—except in that. The conscious innocence flashed up in pride and scorn, in thoughts, even when she was alone, in words, of which she would not have believed herself capable. With hot brow and dry eyes she paced her little chamber, sat down on the bed, staring into vacancy, sprang up and paced again: but she went into no trance—she dare not. The grief was too great; she felt that, if she once gave way enough to lose her self-possession, she should go mad. And the first, and perhaps not the least good effect of that fiery trial was, that it compelled her to a stern self-restraint,

to which her will, weakened by mental luxuriousness, had been long a stranger.

But a fiery trial it was. The first wild (and yet not unnatural) fancy, that heaven had given Thurnall to her, had deepened day by day, by the mere indulgence of it. But she never dreamt of him as her husband: only as a friendless stranger to be helped and comforted. And that he was worthy of help; that some great future was in store for him; that he was a chosen vessel marked out for glory, she had persuaded herself utterly; and the persuasion grew in her day by day, as she heard more and more of his cleverness, honesty, and kindliness, mysterious and, to her, miraculous learning. Therefore she did not make haste; she did not even try to see him, or to speak to him; a civil bow in passing was all that she took or gave; and she was content with that, and waited till the time came, when she was destined to do for him—what she knew not; but it would be done if she were strong enough. So she set herself to learn, and read, and trained her mind and temper more earnestly than ever, and waited in patience for God's good time. And now, behold, a black, unfathomable gulf of doubt and shame had opened between them, perhaps for ever. And a tumult arose in her soul, which cannot be, perhaps ought not to be, analysed in words; but which made her know too well, by her own crimson cheeks, that it was none other than human love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

At last long and agonising prayer brought gentler thoughts, and mere physical exhaustion a calmer mood. How wicked she had been; how rebellious! Why not forgive him, as One greater than she had forgiven? It was ungrateful of him; but was he not human? Why should she expect his heart to be better than hers? Besides, he might have excuses for his suspicion. He might be the best judge, being a man, and such a clever one too. Yes; it was God's cross, and she would bear it; she would try and forget him. No; that was impossible; she must hear of him, if not see him, day by day: besides, was not her fate linked up with his? And yet shut out from him by that dark wall of suspicion! It was very bitter. But she could pray for him; she would pray for him now. Yes; it was God's cross, and she would bear it. He would right her if He thought fit; and if not, what matter? Was she not born to sorrow? Should she complain if another drop, and that the bitterest of all, was added to the cup?

And bear her cross she did, about with her, coming in, and going out, for many a weary day. There was no change in her habits or demeanour; she was never listless for a moment in her school; she was more gay and amusing than ever, when she gathered her little ones around her for a story: but still there was the unseen burden, grinding her heart slowly, till she felt as if every footstep was stained with a drop of her heart's blood. . . . Why not? It would be the sooner over.

Then, at times came that strange woman's pleasure in martyrdom, the secret pride of suffering unjustly: but even that, after a while, she cast away from her, as a snare, and tried to believe that she deserved all her sorrow—deserved it, that is, in the real honest sense of the word; that she had worked it out, and earned it, and brought it on herself—how, she knew not, but longed and strove to know. No; it was no martyrdom. She would not allow herself so silly a cloak of pride; and she went daily to her favourite "Book of Martyrs," to contemplate there the stories of those who really innocent, really suffered for well-doing. And out of that book she began to draw a new and a strange enjoyment, for she soon found that her intense imagination enabled her to re-enact those sad and glorious stories in her own person; to tremble, agonise, and conquer with those heroines who had been for years her highest ideals—and what higher ones could she have? And many a night, after extinguishing the light, and closing her eyes, she would lie motionless for hours on her little bed, not to sleep, but to feel with Perpetua the wild bull's horns, to hang with St. Maura on the cross, or lie with Julitta on the rack, or see with triumphant smile, by Anne Askew's side, the fire flare up around her at the Smithfield stake, or to promise, with dying Dorothea, celestial roses to the mocking youth, whose face too often took the form of Thurnall's; till every nerve quivered responsive to her fancy in agonies of actual pain, which died away at last into heavy slumber, as

body and mind alike gave way before the strain. Sweet fool! she knew not—how could she know?—that she might be rearing in herself the seeds of idiotcy and death: but who that applauds a Rachel or a Ristori, for being able to make awhile their souls and their countenances the homes of the darkest passions, can blame her for enacting in herself, and for herself alone, incidents in which the highest and holiest virtue takes shape in perfect tragedy?

But soon another, and a yet darker cause of sorrow arose in her. It was clear, from what Willis had told her, that she had held the lost belt in her hand. The question was, how had she lost it?

Did her mother know anything about it? That question could not but arise in her mind, though for very reverence she dared not put it to her mother; and with it arose the recollection of her mother's strange silence about the matter. Why had she put away the subject, carelessly, and yet peevishly, whenever it was mentioned? Yes. Why? Did her mother know anything? Was she——? Grace dared not pronounce the adjective, even in thought; dashed it away as a temptation of the devil; dashed away, too, the thought which had forced itself on her too often already, that her mother was not altogether one who possessed the single eye; that in spite of her deep religious feeling, her assurance of salvation, her fits of bitter self-humiliation and despondency, there was an inclination to scheming and intrigue, ambition, covetousness; that the secrets which she gained as class-

leader too, were too often (Grace could but fear) used to her own advantage; that in her dealings her morality was not above the average of little country shopkeepers; that she was apt to have two prices; to keep her books with unnecessary carelessness when the person against whom the account stood was no scholar. Grace had more than once remonstrated in her gentle way; and had been silenced, rather than satisfied, by her mother's commonplaces as to the right of "making those who could pay, pay for those who could not;" that "it was very hard to get a living, and the Lord knew her temptations," and "that God saw no sin in His elect," and "Christ's merits were infinite," and "Christians always had been a backsliding generation;" and all the other commonplaces by which such people drug their consciences to a degree which is utterly incredible, except to those who have seen it with their own eyes, and heard it with their own ears, from childhood.

Once, too, in those very days, some little meanness on her mother's part brought the tears into Grace's eyes, and a gentle rebuke to her lips: but her mother bore the interference less patiently than usual; and answered, not by cant, but by counter-reproach. "Was she the person to accuse a poor widowed mother, struggling to leave her child something to keep her out of the workhouse? A mother that lived for her, would die for her, sell her soul for her, perhaps——"

And there Mrs. Harvey stopped short, turned pale,

and burst into such an agony of tears, that Grace, terrified, threw her arms round her neck, and entreated forgiveness, all the more intensely on account of those thoughts within which she dared not reveal. So the storm passed over. But not Grace's sadness. For she could not but see, with her clear pure spiritual eye, that her mother was just in that state in which some fearful and shameful fall is possible, perhaps wholesome. "She would sell her soul for me? What if she have sold it, and stopped short just now, because she had not the heart to tell me that love for me had been the cause? Oh! if she have sinned for my sake! Wretch that I am! Miserable myself, and bringing misery with me! Why was I ever born? Why cannot I die—and the world be rid of me?"

No, she would not believe it. It was a wicked, horrible, temptation of the devil. She would rather believe that she herself had been the thief, tempted during her unconsciousness; that she had hidden it somewhere; that she should recollect, confess, restore all some day. She would carry it to him herself, grovel at his feet, and entreat forgiveness. "He will surely forgive, when he finds that I was not myself when—that it was not altogether my fault—not as if I had been waking—yes, he will forgive!" And then on that thought followed a dream of what might follow, so wild that a moment after she had hid her blushes in her hands, and fled to books to escape from thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF AN OLD DEBT.

WE must now return to Elsley, who had walked home in a state of mind truly pitiable. He had been flattering his soul with the hope that Thurnall did not know him; that his beard, and the change which years had made, formed a sufficient disguise: but he could not conceal from himself that the very same alterations had not prevented his recognising Thurnall; and he had been living for two months past in continual fear that that would come which now had come.

His rage and terror knew no bounds. Fancying Thurnall a merely mean and self-interested worldling, untouched by those higher aspirations which stood to him in place of a religion, he imagined him making every possible use of his power; and longed to escape to the uttermost ends of the earth from his old tormentor, whom the very sea would not put out of the way, but must needs cast ashore at his very feet, to plague him afresh.

What a net he had spread around his own feet, by one act of foolish vanity! He had taken his present name, merely as a *nom de guerre*, when first

he came to London as a penniless and friendless scribbler. It would hide him from the ridicule (and, as he fancied, spite) of Thurnall, whom he dreaded meeting every time he walked London streets, and who was for years, to his melancholic and too intense fancy, his *bête noir*, his Frankenstein's familiar. Beside, he was ashamed of the name of Briggs. It certainly is not an euphonious or aristocratic name; and "The Soul's Agonies, by John Briggs," would not have sounded as well as "The Soul's Agonies, by Elsley Vavasour." Vavasour was a very pretty name, and one of those which is supposed by novelists and young ladies to be aristocratic;—why so is a puzzle; as its plain meaning is a tenant-farmer, and nothing more nor less. So he had played with the name till he became fond of it, and considered that he had a right to it, through seven long years of weary struggles, penury, disappointment, as he climbed the Parnassian Mount, writing for magazines and newspapers, sub-editing this periodical and that; till he began to be known as a ready, graceful, and trustworthy workman, and was befriended by one kind-hearted *littérateur* after another. For in London, at this moment, any young man of real power will find friends enough, and too many, among his fellow book-wrights, and is more likely to have his head turned by flattery, than his heart crushed by envy. Of course, whatsoever flattery he may receive, he is expected to return; and whatsoever clique he may be tossed into on his *début*, he is expected to stand by, and fight for, against the

universe; but that is but fair. If a young gentleman, invited to enrol himself in the Mutual-puffery Society which meets every Monday and Friday in Hatchgoose the publisher's drawing-room, is willing to pledge himself thereto in the mystic cup of tea, is he not as solemnly bound thenceforth to support those literary Catilines in their efforts for the subversion of common sense, good taste, and established things in general, as if he had pledged them, as he would have done in Rome of old, in his own life-blood? Bound he is, alike by honour and by green tea; and it will be better for him to fulfil his bond. For if association is the cardinal principle of the age, will it not work as well in book-making as in clothes-making? And shall not the motto of the poet (who will also do a little reviewing on the sly) be henceforth that which shines triumphant over all the world, on many a valiant Scotchman's shield—

"Caw me, and I'll caw thee"?

But to do John Briggs justice, he kept his hands, and his heart also, cleaner than most men do, during this stage of his career. After the first excitement of novelty, and of mixing with people who could really talk and think, and who freely spoke out whatever was in them, right or wrong, in language which at least sounded grand and deep, he began to find in the literary world about the same satisfaction for his inner life which he would have found in the sporting world, or the commercial world, or the religious world, or the fashionable world, or any other world,

and to suspect strongly that wheresoever a world is, the flesh and the devil are not very far off. Tired of talking when he wanted to think, of asserting when he wanted to discover, and of hearing his neighbours do the same; tired of little meannesses, envyings, intrigues, jobberies (for the literary world, too, has its jobs), he had been for some time withdrawing himself from the Hatchgoose soirées into his own thoughts, when his "Soul's Agonies" appeared, and he found himself, if not a lion, at least a lion's cub.

There is a house or two in Town where you may meet on certain evenings, everybody; where duchesses and unfledged poets, bishops and red republican refugees, fox-hunting noblemen and briefless barristers who have taken to politics, are jumbled together for a couple of hours, to make what they can out of each other, to the exceeding benefit of them all. For each and every one of them finds his neighbour a pleasanter person than he expected; and none need leave those rooms without knowing something more than he did when he came in, and taking an interest in some human being who may need that interest. To one of these houses, no matter which, Elsley was invited on the strength of the "Soul's Agonies;" found himself, for the first time, face to face with high-bred Englishwomen; and fancied—small blame to him—that he was come to the mountains of the Peris, and to Fairy Land itself. He had been flattered already: but never with such grace, such sympathy, or such seeming understanding; for there are few high-bred

women who cannot seem to understand, and delude a hapless genius into a belief in their own surpassing brilliance and penetration, while they are cunningly retailing again to him the thoughts which they have caught up from the man to whom they spoke last; perhaps—for this is the very triumph of their art—from the very man to whom they are speaking. Small blame to bashful, clumsy John Briggs, if he did not know his own children; and could not recognise his own stammered and fragmentary fancies, when they were re-echoed to him the next minute, in the prettiest shape, and with the most delicate articulation, from lips which (like those in the fairy tale) never opened without dropping pearls and diamonds.

Oh, what a contrast, in the eyes of a man whose sense of beauty and grace, whether physical or intellectual, was true and deep, to that ghastly ring of prophetesses in the Hatchgoose drawing-room; strong-minded and emancipated women, who prided themselves on having cast off conventionalities, and on being rude, and awkward, and dogmatic, and irreverent, and sometimes slightly improper; women who had missions to mend everything in heaven and earth, except themselves; who had quarrelled with their husbands, and had therefore felt a mission to assert women's rights, and reform marriage in general; or who had never been able to get married at all, and therefore were especially competent to promulgate a model method of educating the children whom they never had had; women who wrote poetry about Lady

Blanches whom they never had met, and novels about male and female blackguards whom (one hopes) they never had met, or about whom (if they had) decent women would have held their peace; and every one of whom had in obedience to Emerson, "followed her impulses," and despised fashion, and was accordingly clothed and bedizened as was right in the sight of her own eyes, and probably in those of no one else.

No wonder that Elsley, ere long, began drawing comparisons, and using his wit upon ancient patronesses, of course behind their backs, likening them to idols fresh from the car of Juggernaut, or from the stern of a South Sea canoe; or, most of all, to that famous wooden image of Freya, which once leapt lumbering forth from her bullock-cart, creaking and rattling in every oaken joint, to belabour the too daring Viking who was flirting with her priestess. Even so, whispered Elsley, did those brains and tongues creak and rattle, lumbering before the blasts of Pythonic inspiration; and so, he verily believed, would the awkward arms and legs have done likewise, if one of the Pythonesses had ever so far degraded herself as to dance.

No wonder, then, that those gifted dames had soon to complain of Elsley Vavasour as a traitor to the cause of progress and civilisation; a renegade who had fled to the camp of aristocracy, flunkeydom, obscurantism, frivolity, and dissipation; though there was not one of them but would have given an eye—perhaps no great loss to the aggregate loveliness of

the universe — for one of his invitations to 999 Cavendish Street south-east, with the chance of being presented to the Duchess of Lyonesse.

To do Elsley justice, one reason why he liked his new acquaintances so well was, that they liked him. He behaved well himself, and therefore people behaved well to him. He was, as I have said, a very handsome fellow in his way; therefore it was easy to him, as it is to all physically beautiful persons, to acquire a graceful manner. Moreover, he had steeped his whole soul in old poetry, and especially in Spenser's Faëry Queen. Good for him, had he followed every lesson which he might have learnt out of that most noble of English books: but one lesson at least he learnt from it; and that was, to be chivalrous, tender, and courteous to all women, however old or ugly, simply because they were women. The Hatchgoose Pythonesses did not wish to be women, but very bad imitations of men; and therefore he considered himself absolved from all knightly duties toward them: but toward these Peris of the west, and to the dowagers who had been Peris in their time, what adoration could be too great? So he bowed down and worshipped; and, on the whole, he was quite right in so doing. Moreover, he had the good sense to discover, that though the young Peris were the prettiest to look at, the elder Peris were the better company; and that it is, in general, from married women that a poet or any one else will ever learn what woman's heart is like. And so well did he carry out his creed,

that before his first summer was over he had quite captivated the heart of old Lady Knockdown, aunt to Lucia St. Just, and wife to Lucia's guardian; a charming old Irishwoman, who affected a pretty brogue, perhaps for the same reason that she wore a wig, and who had been, in her day, a beauty and a blue, a friend of the Miss Berrys, and Tommy Moore, and Grattan, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and Dan O'Connell, and all other lions and lionesses which had roared for the last sixty years about the Emerald Isle. There was no one whom she did not know, and nothing she could not talk about. Married up, when a girl, to a man for whom she did not care, and having no children, she had indemnified herself by many flirtations, and the writing of two or three novels, in which she penned on paper the superfluous feeling which had no vent in real life. She had deserted, as she grew old, the novel for unfulfilled prophecy; and was a distinguished leader in a distinguished religious coterie: but she still prided herself upon having a green head upon grey shoulders; and not without reason; for underneath all the worldliness and intrigue, and petty affectation of girlishness, which she contrived to jumble in with her religiosity, beat a young and kindly heart. So she was charmed with Mr. Vavasour's manners, and commended them much to Lucia, who, a shrinking girl of seventeen, was peeping at her first season from under Lady Knockdown's sheltering wing.

"Me dear, let Mr. Vavasour be who he will, he has not only the intellect of a true genius, but what is a

great deal better for practical purposes; that is, the manners of one. Give me the man who will let a woman of our rank say what we like to him, without supposing that he may say what he likes in return; and considers one's familiarity as an honour, and not as an excuse for taking liberties. A most agreeable contrast, indeed, to the young men of the present day; who come in their shooting jackets, and talk slang to their partners,—though really the girls are just as bad,—and stand with their backs to the fire, and smell of smoke, and go to sleep after dinner, and pay no respect to old age, nor to youth either, I think. 'Pon me word, Lucia, the answers I've heard young gentlemen make to young ladies, this very season,—they'd have been called out the next morning in my time, me dear. As for the age of chivalry, nobody expects that to be restored: but really one might have been spared the substitute for it which we had when I was young, in the grand air of the old school. It was a 'sham,' I daresay, as they call everything now-a-days: but really, me dear, a pleasant sham is better to live with than an unpleasant reality, especially when it smells of cigars."

So it befell that Elsley Vavasour was asked to Lady Knockdown's, and that there he fell in love with Lucia, and Lucia fell in love with him.

The next winter, old Lord Knockdown, who had been decrepit for some years past, died; and his widow, whose income was under five hundred a year, —for the estates were entailed, and mortgaged, and

everything else which can happen to an Irish property, —came to live with her nephew, Lord Scoutbush, in Eaton Square, and take such care as she could of Lucia and Valencia.

So, after a dreary autumn and winter of parting and silence, Elsley found himself the next season invited to Eaton Square; there the mischief, if mischief it was, was done; and Elsley and Lucia started in life upon two hundred a year. He had inherited some fifty of his own; she had about a hundred and fifty, which, indeed, was not yet her own by right; but little Scoutbush (who was her sole surviving guardian) behaved on the whole very well for a young gentleman of twenty-two, in a state of fury and astonishment. The old Lord had, wisely enough, settled in his will that Lucia was to enjoy the interest of her fortune from the time that she came out, provided she did not marry without her guardian's leave; and Scoutbush, to avoid esclandre and misery, thought it as well to waive the proviso, and paid her her dividends as usual.

But how had she contrived to marry at all without his leave? That is an ugly question. I will not say that she had told a falsehood, or that Elsley had forsworn himself when he got the licence: but certainly both of them were guilty of something very like a white lie, when they declared that Lucia had the consent of her sole surviving guardian, on the strength of an half-angry, half-jesting expression of Scoutbush's that she might marry whom she chose,

provided she did not plague him. In the first triumph of success and intoxication of wedded bliss, Lucia had written him a saucy letter, reminding him of his permission, and saying that she had taken him at his word: but her conscience smote her; and Elsley's smote him likewise; and smote him all the more, because he had been married under a false name, a fact which might have ugly consequences in law which he did not like to contemplate. To do him justice, he had been half-a-dozen times during his courtship on the point of telling Lucia his real name and history. Happy for him had he done so, whatever might have been the consequences: but he wanted moral courage; the hideous sound of Briggs had become horrible to him; and once his foolish heart was frightened away from honesty, just as honesty was on the point of conquering, by old Lady Knockdown's saying that she could never have married a man with an ugly name, or let Lucia marry one.

"Conceive becoming Mrs. Natty Bumppo, me dear, even for twenty thousand a year. If you could summon up courage to do the deed, I couldn't summon up courage to continue my correspondence with ye."

Elsley knew that that was a lie; that the old lady would have let her marry the most triumphant snob in England, if he had half that income: but unfortunately Lucia capped her aunt's nonsense with "There is no fear of my ever marrying any one who has not a graceful name," and a look at Vavasour, which said

—"And you have one, and therefore I——" For the matter had then been settled between them. This was too much for his vanity, and too much, also, for his fears of losing Lucia by confessing the truth. So Elsley went on, ashamed of his real name, ashamed of having concealed it, ashamed of being afraid that it would be discovered,—in a triple complication of shame, which made him gradually, as it makes every man, moody, suspicious, apt to take offence where none is meant. Besides they were very poor. He, though neither extravagant nor profligate, was, like most literary men who are accustomed to live from hand to mouth, careless, self-indulgent, unmethodical. She knew as much of housekeeping as the Queen of Oude does; and her charming little dreams of shopping for herself were rudely enough broken, ere the first week was out, by the horrified looks of Clara, when she returned from her first morning's marketing for the weekly consumption, with nothing but a woodcock, some truffles, and a bunch of celery. Then the landlady of the lodgings robbed her, even under the nose of the faithful Clara, who knew as little about housekeeping as her mistress; and Clara, faithful as she was, repaid herself by grumbling and taking liberties for being degraded from the luxurious post of lady's maid to that of servant of all work, with a landlady, and "marchioness" to wrestle with all day long. Then, what with imprudence and anxiety, Lucia of course lost her first child: and after that came months of illness, during which Elsley tended

her, it must be said for him, as lovingly as a mother; and perhaps they were both really happier during that time of sorrow than they had been in all the delirious bliss of the honeymoon.

Valencia meanwhile defied old Lady Knockdown (whose horror and wrath knew no bounds), and walked off one morning with her maid to see her prodigal sister; a visit which not only brought comfort to the weary heart, but important practical benefits. For going home, she seized upon Scoutbush, and so moved his heart with pathetic pictures of Lucia's unheard-of penury and misery, that his heart was softened; and though he absolutely refused to call on Vavasour, he made him an offer, through Lucia, of Penalva Court for the time being; and thither they went—perhaps the best thing they could have done.

There, of course, they were somewhat more comfortable. A very cheap country, a comfortable house rent free, and a lovely neighbourhood, were a pleasant change after dear London lodgings: but it is a question whether the change made Elsley a better man.

In the first place, he became a more idle man. The rich enervating climate began to tell upon his mind, as it did upon Lucia's health. He missed that perpetual spur of nervous excitement, change of society, influx of ever-fresh objects, which makes London, after all, the best place in the world for hard working; and which makes even a walk along

the streets an intellectual tonic. In the soft and luxurious West Country Nature invited him to look at her, and dream; and dream he did, more and more, day by day. He was tired, too—as who would not be?—of the drudgery of writing for his daily bread; and relieved from the importunities of publishers and printers'-devils, he sent up fewer and fewer contributions to the magazines. He would keep his energies for a great work; poetry was, after all, his forte: he would not fritter himself away on prose and periodicals, but would win for himself, etc. etc. If he made a mistake, it was at least a pardonable one.

But Elsley became not only a more idle, but a more morose man. He began to feel the evils of solitude. There was no one near with whom he could hold rational converse, save an antiquarian parson or two; and parsons were not to his taste. So, never measuring his wits against those of his peers, and despising the few men whom he met as inferior to himself, he grew more and more wrapt up in his own thoughts and his own tastes. His own poems, even to the slightest turn of expression, became more and more important to him. He grew more jealous of criticism, more confident in his own little theories, about this and that, more careless of the opinion of his fellowmen, and, as a certain consequence, more unable to bear the little crosses and contradictions of daily life; and as Lucia, having brought one and another child safely into the world, settled down into motherhood, he became less and less attentive to her,

and more and more attentive to that self which was fast becoming the centre of his universe.

True, there were excuses for him; for whom are there none? He was poor and struggling; and it is much more difficult (as Becky Sharp, I think, pathetically observes) to be good when one is poor than when one is rich. It is (and all rich people should consider the fact) much more easy, if not to go to heaven, at least to think one is going thither, on three thousand a year, than on three hundred. Not only is respectability more easy, as is proved by the broad fact that it is the poor people who fill the gaols, and not the rich ones: but virtue, and religion—of the popular sort. It is undeniably more easy to be resigned to the will of Heaven, when that will seems tending just as we would have it; much more easy to have faith in the goodness of Providence, when that goodness seems safe in one's pocket in the form of bank-notes; and to believe that one's children are under the protection of Omnipotence, when one can hire for them in half an hour the best medical advice in London. One need only look into one's own heart to understand the disciples' astonishment at the news, that "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"Who then can be saved?" asked they, being poor men, accustomed to see the wealthy Pharisees in possession of "the highest religious privileges, and means of grace." Who, indeed, if not the rich? If the noblemen, and the bankers, and the dowagers, and

the young ladies who go to church, and read good books, and have been supplied from youth with the very best religious articles which money can procure, and have time for all manner of good works, and give their hundreds to charities, and head reformatory movements, and build churches, and work altar-cloths, and can taste all the preachers and father-confessors round London, one after another, as you would taste wines, till they find the spiritual panacea which exactly suits their complaint—if they are not sure of salvation, who can be saved?

Without further comment, the fact is left for the consideration of all readers; only let them not be too hard upon Elsley and Lucia, if, finding themselves sometimes literally at their wits' end, they went beyond their poor wits into the region where foolish things are said and done.

Moreover, Elsley's ill-temper (as well as Lucia's) had its excuses in physical ill-health. Poor fellow! Long years of sedentary work had begun to tell upon him; and while Tom Thurnall's chest, under the influence of hard work and oxygen, measured round perhaps six inches more than it had done sixteen years ago, Elsley's, thanks to stooping and carbonic acid, measured six inches less. Short breath, lassitude, loss of appetite, heartburn, and all that fair company of miseries which Mr. Cockle and his Antibilious Pills profess to cure, are no cheering bosom friends; but when a man's breast-bone is gradually growing into his stomach, they will make their appearance;

and small blame to him whose temper suffers from their gentle hints that he has a mortal body as well as an immortal soul.

But most fretting of all was the discovery that Lucia knew—if not all about his original name—still enough to keep him in dread lest she should learn more.

It was now twelve months and more that this new terror had leapt up and stared in his face. He had left a letter about—a thing which he was apt to do—in which the Whitbury lawyer made some allusions to his little property; and he was sure that Lucia had seen it; the hated name of Briggs certainly she had not seen; for Elsley had torn it out the moment he opened the letter: but she had seen enough, as he soon found, to be certain that he had, at some time or other, passed under a different name.

If Lucia had been a more thoughtful or high-minded woman, she would have gone straight to her husband, and quietly and lovingly asked him to tell her all: but, in her left-handed Irish fashion, she kept the secret to herself, and thought it a very good joke to have him in her power, and to be able to torment him about that letter when he got out of temper. It never occurred, however, to her that his present name was the feigned one. She fancied that he had, in some youthful escapade, assumed the name to which the lawyer alluded. So the next time he was cross, she tried laughingly the effect of her newly-discovered spell; and was horror-struck at the

storm which she evoked. In a voice of thunder, Elsley commanded her never to mention the subject again; and showed such signs of terror and remorse, that she obeyed him from that day forth, except when now and then she lost her temper as completely, too, as he. Little she thought, in her heedlessness, what a dark cloud of fear and suspicion, ever deepening and spreading, she had put between his heart and hers.

But if Elsley had dreaded her knowledge of his story, he dreaded ten times more Tom's knowledge of it. What if Thurnall should tell Lucia? What if Lucia should make a confidant of Thurnall? Women told their doctors everything; and Lucia, he knew too well, had cause to complain of him. Perhaps, thought he, maddened into wild suspicion by the sense of his own wrong-doing, she might complain of him; she might combine with Thurnall against him—for what purpose he knew not: but the wildest imaginations flashed across him, as he hurried desperately home, intending as soon as he got there to forbid Lucia's ever calling in his dreaded enemy. No, Thurnall should never cross his door again! On that one point he was determined, but on nothing else.

However, his intention was never fulfilled. For long before he reached home he began to feel himself thoroughly ill. His was a temperament upon which mental anxiety acts rapidly and severely; and the burning sun, and his rapid walk, combined with rage

and terror to give him such a "turn" that, as he hurried down the lane, he found himself reeling like a drunken man. He had just time to hurry through the garden, and into his study, when pulse and sense failed him, and he rolled over on the sofa in a dead faint.

Lucia had seen him come in, and heard him fall, and rushed in. The poor little thing was at her wits' end, and thought that he had had nothing less than a *coup-de-soleil*. And when he recovered from his faintness, he began to be so horribly ill, that Clara, who had been called in to help, had some grounds for the degrading hypothesis (for which Lucia all but boxed her ears) that "Master had got away into the woods, and gone eating toadstools, or some such poisonous stuff;" for he lay a full half-hour on the sofa, death-cold, and almost pulseless; moaning, shuddering, hiding his face in his hands, and refusing cordials, medicines, and, above all, a doctor's visit.

However, this could not be allowed to last. Without Elsley's knowledge, a messenger was despatched for Thurnall, and luckily met him in the lane; for he was returning to the town in the footsteps of his victim.

Elsley's horror was complete, when the door opened, and Lucia brought in none other than his tormentor.

"My dearest Elsley, I have sent for Mr. Thurnall. I knew you would not let me, if I told you; but you

see I have done it, and now you must really speak to him."

Elsley's first impulse was to motion them both away angrily; but the thought that he was in Thurnall's power stopped him. He must not show his disgust. What if Lucia were to ask its cause, even to guess it? for to his fears even that seemed possible. A fresh misery! Just because he shrank so intensely from the man, he must endure him!

"There is nothing the matter with me," said he languidly.

"I should be the best judge of that, after what Mrs. Vavasour has just told me," said Tom, in his most professional and civil voice; and slipped, cat-like, into a seat beside the unresisting poet.

He asked question on question: but Elsley gave such unsatisfactory answers, that Lucia had to detail everything afresh for him, with—"You know, Mr. Thurnall, he is always overtasking his brain, and will never confess himself ill,"—and all a woman's anxious comments.

Rogue Tom knew all the while well enough what was the cause: but he saw, too, that Elsley was very ill. He felt that he must have the matter out at once; and, by a side glance, sent the obedient Lucia out of the room to get a table-spoonful of brandy.

"Now, my dear sir, that we are alone," began he blandly.

"Now, sir!" answered Vavasour, springing off the sofa, his whole pent-up wrath exploding in hissing

steam, the moment the safety-valve was lifted. "Now, sir! What—what is the meaning of this insolence, this intrusion?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Vavasour," answered Tom, rising, in a tone of bland and stolid surprise.

"What do you want here, with your mummery and medicine, when you know the cause of my malady well enough already? Go, sir! and leave me to myself."

"My dear sir," said Tom firmly, "you seem to have forgotten what passed between us this morning."

"Will you insult me beyond endurance?" cried Elsley.

"I told you that, as long as you chose, you were Elsley Vavasour, and I the country doctor. We have met in that character. Why not sustain it? You are really ill; and if I know the cause, I am all the more likely to know the cure."

"Cure?"

"Why not? Believe me, it is in your power to become a much happier man, simply by becoming a healthier one."

"Impertinence!"

"Pish! What can I gain by being impertinent, sir? I know very well that you have received a severe shock; but I know equally well, that if you were as you ought to be, you would not feel it in this way. When one sees a man in the state of prostration in which you are, common sense tells one that the body must have been neglected, for the mind to gain such power over it."

Elsley replied with a grunt; but Tom went on, bland and imperturbable.

"Believe me, it may be a very materialist view of things: but fact is fact—the *corpus sanum* is father to the *mens sana*—tonics and exercise make the ills of life look marvellously smaller. You have the frame of a strong and active man; and all you want to make you light-hearted and cheerful, is to develop what nature has given you."

"It is too late," said Elsley, pleased, as most men are, by being told that they might be strong and active.

"Not in the least. Three months would strengthen your muscles, open your chest again, settle your digestion, and make you as fresh as a lark, and able to sing like one. Believe me, the poetry would be the better for it, as well as the stomach. Now, positively, I shall begin questioning you."

So Elsley was won to detail the symptoms of internal *malaise*, which he was only too much in the habit of watching himself; but there were some among them which Tom could not quite account for on the ground of mere effeminate habits. A thought struck him.

"You sleep ill, I suppose?" said he carelessly.

"Very ill."

"Did you ever try opiates?"

"No—yes—that is, sometimes."

"Ah!" said Tom, more carelessly still, for he wished to hide, by all means, the importance of the confession. "Well, they give relief for a time: but

they are dangerous things—disorder the digestion, and have their revenge on the nerves next morning, as spitefully as brandy itself. Much better try a glass of strong ale or porter just before going to bed. I've known it give sleep, even in consumption—try it, and exercise. You shoot?"

"No."

"Pity; there ought to be noble cocking in these woods. However, the season's past. You fish?"

"No."

"Pity again. I hear Alva is full of trout. Why not try sailing? Nothing oxygenates the lungs like a sail, and your friends the fishermen would be delighted to have you as super-cargo. They are always full of your stories to them, and your picking their brains for old legends and adventures."

"They are noble fellows, and I want no better company; but, unfortunately, I am always sea-sick."

"Ah! wholesome, but unpleasant: you are fond of gardening?"

"Very; but stooping makes my head swim."

"True, and I don't want you to stoop. I hope to see you soon as erect as a Guardsman. Why not try walks?"

"Abominable bores—lonely, aimless——"

"Well, perhaps you're right. I never knew but three men who took long constitutionals on principle, and two of them were cracked. But why not try a companion; and persuade that curate, who needs just the same medicine as you, to accompany you? I don't

know a more gentleman-like, agreeable, well-informed man than he is."

"Thank you. I can choose my acquaintances for myself."

"You touchy ass!" said Thurnall to himself. "If we were in the blessed state of nature now, wouldn't I give you ten minutes' double thonging, and then set you to work, as the runaway nigger did his master, Bird o' freedom Sawin, till you'd learnt a thing or two." But blandly still he went on.

"Try the dumb-bells then. Nothing like them for opening your chest. And do get a high desk made, and stand to your writing instead of sitting." And Tom actually made Vavasour promise to do both, and bade him farewell with——

"Now, I'll send you up a little tonic; and trouble you with no more visits till you send for me. I shall see by one glance at your face whether you are following my prescriptions. And, I say, I wouldn't meddle with those opiates any more; try good malt and hops instead."

"Those who drink beer, think beer," said Elsley, smiling; for he was getting more hopeful of himself, and his terrors were vanishing beneath Tom's skilful management.

"And those who drink water, think water. The Elizabethans—Sidney and Shakspeare, Burleigh and Queen Bess, worked on beef and ale,—and you would not class them among the muddle-headed of the earth: Believe me, to write well, you must live well.

If you take it out of your brain, you must put it in again. It's a question of fact. Try it for yourself." And off Tom went; while Lucia rushed back to her husband, covered him with caresses, assured him that he was seven times as ill as he really was, and so nursed and petted him, that he felt himself, for that time at least, a beast and a fool for having suspected her for a moment. Ah, woman, if you only knew how you carry our hearts in your hands, and would but use your power for our benefit, what angels you might make us all!

"So," said Tom, as he went home, "he has found his way to the elevation-bottle, has he, as well as Mrs. Heale? It's no concern of mine: but as a professional man, I must stop that. You will certainly be no credit to me if you kill yourself under my hands."

Tom went straight home, showed the blacksmith how to make a pair of dumb-bells, covered them himself with leather, and sent them up the next morning with directions to be used for half an hour morning and evening.

And something—whether it was the dumb-bells, or the tonic, or wholesome fear of the terrible doctor—kept Elsley for the next month in better spirits and temper than he had been in for a long while.

Moreover, Tom set Lucia to coax him into walking with Headley. She succeeded at last; and, on the whole, each of them soon found that he had something to learn from the other. Elsley improved daily in health, and Lucia wrote to Valencia flaming accounts

of the wonderful doctor who had been cast on shore in their world's end; and received from her after a while this, amid much more—for fancy is not exuberant enough to reproduce the whole of a young lady's letter.

"—I am so ashamed. I ought to have told you of that doctor a fortnight ago; but, rattle-pate as I am, I forgot all about it. Do you know, he is Sabina Mellot's dearest friend; and she begged me to recommend him to you; but I put it off, and then it slipped my memory, like everything else good. She has told me the most wonderful stories of his courage and goodness; and conceive—she and her husband were taken prisoners with him by the savages in the South Seas, and going to be eaten, she says: but he helped them to escape in a canoe—such a story—and lived with them for three months on the most beautiful desert island—it is all like a fairy tale. I'll tell it you when I come, darling—which I shall do in a fortnight, and we shall be all so happy. I have such a box ready for you and the chicks, which I shall bring with me; and some pretty things from Scoutbush beside, who is very low, poor fellow, I cannot conceive what about: but wonderfully tender about you. I fancy he must be in love; for he stood up the other day about you to my aunt, quite solemnly, with, 'Let her alone, my lady. She's not the first whom love has made a fool of, and she won't be the last: and I believe that some of the moves which look most foolish, turn out best after all. Live and let live; everybody knows his own business best; anything is

better than marriage without real affection.' Conceive my astonishment at hearing the dear little fellow turn sage in that way!

"By the way, I have had to quote his own advice against him; for I have refused Lord Chalkclere after all. I told him (C. not S.) that he was much too good for me: far too perfect and complete a person; that I preferred a husband whom I could break in for myself, even though he gave me a little trouble. Scoutbush was cross at first; but he said afterwards that it was just like Baby Blake (the wretch always calls me Baby Blake now, after that dreadful girl in Lever's Novel); and I told him frankly that it was, if he meant that I had sooner break in a thorough-bred for myself, even though I had a fall or two in the process, than jog along on the most finished little pony on earth, who would never go out of an amble. Lord Chalkclere may be very finished, and learned, and excellent, and so forth: but, *ma chère*, I want, not a white rabbit (of which he always reminds me), but a hero, even though he be a naughty one. I always fancy people must be very little if they can be finished off so rapidly; if there was any real verve in them, they would take somewhat longer to grow. Lord Chalkclere would do very well to bind in Russian leather, and put on one's library shelves, to be consulted when one forgot a date; but really even your Ulysses of a doctor—provided, of course, he turned out a prince in disguise, and don't leave out his h's—would be more to the taste of your naughtiest of sisters."

CHAPTER XII.

A PEER IN TROUBLE.

SOMEWHERE in those days, so it seems, did Mr Bowie call unto himself a cab at the barrack-gate, and, dressed in his best array, repair to the wilds of Brompton, and request to see either Claude or Mrs. Mellot.

Bowie is an ex-Scots-Fusilier, who, damaged by the kick of a horse, has acted as valet, first to Scoutbush's father, and next to Scoutbush himself. He is of a patronising habit of mind, as befits a tolerably "leeterary" Scotsman of forty-five years of age and six-feet three in height, who has full confidence in the integrity of his own virtue, the infallibility of his own opinion, and the strength of his own right arm; for Bowie, though he has a rib or two "dinged in," is mighty still as Theseus' self; and both astonished his red-bearded compatriots, and won money for his master, by his prowess in the late feat of arms at Holland House.

Mr. Bowie is asked to walk into Sabina's boudoir (for Claude is out in the garden), to sit down, and deliver his message: which he does after a due mili-

tary salute, sitting bolt upright in his chair, and in a solemn and sonorous voice.

"Well, madam, it's just this, that his lordship would be very glad to see ye and Mr. Mellot, for he's vary ill indeed, and that's truth; and if he winna tell ye the cause, then I will—and it's just a' for love of this play-acting body here, and more's the pity."

"More's the pity, indeed!"

"And it's my opeenion the puir laddie will just die, if nobody sees to him; and I've taken the liberty of writing to Major Cawmill mysel', to beg him to come up and see to him, for it's a pity to see his lordship cast away, for want of an understanding body to advise him."

"So I am not an understanding body, Bowie?"

"Oh, madam, ye're young and bonny," says Bowie, in a tone in which admiration is not unmingled with pity.

"Young indeed! Mr. Bowie, do you know that I am almost as old as you?"

"Hoot, hut, hut——" says Bowie, looking at the wax-like complexion and bright hawk-eyes.

"Really I am. I'm past five-and-thirty this many a day."

"Weel, then, madam, if you'll excuse me, ye're old enough to be wiser than to let his lordship be inveigled with any such play-acting."

"Really he's not inveigled," says Sabina, laughing. "It is all his own fault, and I have warned him how absurd and impossible it is. She has refused even to

see him; and you know yourself he has not been near our house for these three weeks."

"Ah, madam, you'll excuse me: but that's the way with that sort of people, just to draw back and draw back, to make a poor young gentleman follow them all the keener, as a trout does a minnow, the faster you spin it."

"I assure you no. I can't let you into ladies' secrets: but there is no more chance of her listening to him than of me. And as for me, I have been trying all the spring to marry him to a young lady with eighty thousand pounds; so you can't complain of me."

"Eh? No. That's more like and fitting."

"Well, now. Tell his lordship that we are coming; and trust us, Mr. Bowie: we do not look very villainous, do we?"

"Faith, 'deed then, and I suppose not," said Bowie, using the verb which, in his cautious, Scottish tongue, expresses complete certainty. The truth is, that Bowie adores both Sabina and her husband, who are, he says, "just fit to be put under a glass case on the sideboard, like twa wee china angels."

In half an hour they were in Scoutbush's rooms. They found the little man lying on his sofa, in his dressing-gown, looking pale and pitiable enough. He had been trying to read; for the table by him was covered with books; but either gunnery and mathematics had injured his eyes, or he had been crying; Sabina inclined to the latter opinion.

"This is very kind of you both; but I don't want you, Claude. I want Mrs. Mellot. You go to the window with Bowie."

Bowie and Claude shrugged their shoulders at each other, and departed.

"Now, Mrs. Mellot, I can't help looking up to you as a mother."

"Complimentary to my youth," says Sabina, who always calls herself young when she is called old, and old when she is called young.

"I didn't mean to be rude. But one does long to open one's heart. I never had any mother to talk to, you know; and I can't tell my aunt; and Valencia is so flighty; and I thought you would give me one chance more Don't laugh at me, I say. I am really past laughing at."

"I see you are, you poor creature," says Sabina, melting; and a long conversation follows, while Claude and Bowie exchange confidences, and arrive at no result beyond the undeniable assertion; "it is a very bad job."

Presently Sabina comes out, and Scoutbush calls cheerfully from the sofa:—

"Bowie, get my bath and things to dress; and order me the cab in half an hour. Good-bye, you dear people, I shall never thank you enough."

Away go Claude and Sabina in a hack-cab.

"What have you done?"

"Given him what he entreated for — another chance with Marie."

"It will only madden him all the more. Why let him try, when you know it is hopeless."

"Why, I had not the heart to refuse, that's the truth; and besides, I don't know that it is hopeless."

"All the naughtier of you, to let him run the chance of making a fool of himself."

"I don't know that he will make such a great fool of himself. As he says, his grandfather married an actress, and why should not he?"

"Simply because she won't marry him."

"And how do you know that, sir? You fancy that you understand all the women's hearts in England, just because you have found out the secret of managing one little fool."

"Managing her, quotha! Being managed by her, till my quiet house is turned into a perfect volcano of match-making. Why, I thought he was to marry Manchestrina."

"He shall marry who he likes; and if Marie changes her mind, and revenges herself on this American by taking Lord Scoutbush, all I can say is, it will be a just judgment on him. I have no patience with the heartless fellow, going off thus, and never even leaving his address."

"And because you have no patience, you think Marie will have none?"

"What do you know about women's hearts? Leave us to mind our own matters."

"Mr. Bowie will kill you outright, if your plot succeeds."

"No, he won't. I know who Bowie wants to marry; and if he is not good, he shan't have her. Besides, it will be such fun to spite old Lady Knockdown, who always turns up her nose at me. How mad she will be! Here we are at home. Now, I shall go and prepare Marie."

An hour after, Scoutbush was pleading his cause with Marie; and had been met, of course, at starting, with the simple rejoinder,—

"But, my lord, you would not surely have me marry where I do not love?"

"Oh, of course not; but, you see, people very often get love after they are married:—and I am sure I would do all to make you love me. I know I can't bribe you by promising you carriages and jewels, and all that:—but you should have what you would like—pictures and statues, and books—and all that I can buy—Oh, madam, I know I am not worthy of you—I never have had any education as you have!"—

Marie smiled a sad smile.

"But I would learn—I know I could—for I am no fool, though I say it: I like all that sort of thing, and —and if I had you to teach me, I should care about nothing else. I have given up all my nonsense since I knew you; indeed I have—I am trying all day long to read—ever since you said something about being useful, and noble, and doing one's work:—I have never forgotten that, madam, and never shall; and you would find me a pleasant person to live with, I do believe. At all events, I would—oh, madam—I would be your

servant, your dog—I would fetch and carry for you like a negro slave!"

Marie turned pale, and rose.

"Listen to me, my lord; this must end. You do not know to whom you are speaking. You talk of negro slaves. Know that you are talking to one!"

Scoutbush looked at her in blank astonishment.

"Madam? Excuse me: but my own eyes——"

"You are not to trust them; I tell you fact."

Scoutbush was silent. She misunderstood his silence: but went on steadily.

"I tell you, my lord, what I expect you to keep secret: and I know that I can trust your honour."

Scoutbush bowed.

"And what I should never have told you, were it not my only chance of curing you of this foolish passion. I am an American slave!"

"Curse them! Who dared make you a slave?" cried Scoutbush, turning as red as a game-cock.

"I was born a slave. My father was a white gentleman of good family: my mother was a quadroon; and therefore I am a slave;—a negress, a runaway slave, my lord, who, if I returned to America, should be seized, and chained, and scourged, and sold. —Do you understand me?"

"What an infernal shame!" cried Scoutbush, to whom the whole thing appeared simply as a wrong done to Marie.

"Well, my lord?"

"Well, madam?"

"Does not this fact put the question at rest for ever?"

"No, madam! What do I know about slaves? No one is a slave in England. No madam; all that it does is to make me long to cut half-a-dozen fellows' throats——" and Scoutbush stamped with rage. "No, madam, you are you: and if you become my viscountess, you take my rank, I trust, and my name is yours, and my family yours; and let me see who dare interfere!"

"But public opinion, my lord?" said Marie, half-pleased, half-terrified to find the shaft which she had fancied fatal fall harmless at her feet.

"Public opinion? You don't know England, madam! What's the use of my being a peer, if I can't do what I like, and make public opinion go my way, and not I its? Though I am no great prince, madam, but only a poor Irish viscount, it's hard if I can't marry whom I like—in reason, that is—and expect all the world to call on her, and treat her as she deserves. Why, madam, you will have all London at your feet after a season or two, and all the more if they know your story: or if you don't like that, or if fools did talk at first, why we'd go and live quietly at Kilanbaggan, or at Penalva, and you'd have all the tenants looking up to you as a goddess, as I do, madam.—Oh, madam, I would go anywhere, live anywhere, only to be with you!"

Marie was deeply affected. Making all allowances for the wilfulness of youth, she could not but see that

her origin formed no bar whatever to her marrying a nobleman; and that he honestly believed that it would form none in the opinion of his compeers, if she proved herself worthy of his choice; and, full of new emotions, she burst into tears.

"There, now, you are melting: I knew you would! Madam! Signora?" and Scoutbush advanced to take her hand.

"Never less," cried she, drawing back. "Do not;—you only make me miserable! I tell you it is impossible. I cannot tell you all.—You must not do yourself and yours such an injustice! Go, I tell you!"

Scoutbush still tried to take her hand.

"Go, I entreat you," cried she, at her wits' end, "or I will really ring the bell for Mrs. Mellot!"

"You need not do that, madam," said he, drawing himself up; "I am not in the habit of being troublesome to ladies, or being turned out of drawing-rooms. I see how it is——" and his tone softened; "you despise me, and think me a vain, frivolous puppy.—Well; I'll do something yet that you shall not despise!" And he turned to go.

"I do not despise you; I think you a generous, high-hearted gentleman—nobleman in all senses."

Scoutbush turned again.

"But, again, impossible! I shall always respect you; but we must never meet again."

She held out her hand. Little Freddy caught and kissed it till he was breathless, and then rushed out, and blundered over Sabina in the next room.

"No hope?"

"None." And though he tried to squeeze his eyes together very tight, the great tears would come dropping down.

Sabina took him to a sofa, and sat him down while he made his little moan.

"I told you that she was in love with the American."

"Then why don't he come back and marry her! Hang him, I'll go after him and make him!" cried Scoutbush, glad of any object on which to vent his wrath.

"You can't, for nobody knows where he is. Now do be good and patient; you will forget all this."

"I shan't!"

"You will; not at first, but gradually; and marry some one really more fit for you."

"Ah, but if I marry her I shan't love her; and then, you know, Mrs. Mellot, I shall go to the bad again, just as much as ever. Oh, I was trying to be steady for her sake!"

"You can be that still."

"Yes, but it's so hard, with nothing to hope for. I'm not fit to take care of myself. I'm fit for nothing, I believe, but to go out and be shot by those Russians; and I'll do it!"

"You must not; you are not strong enough. The doctors would not let you go as you are."

"Then I'll get strong; I'll——"

"You'll go home, and be good."

"Ain't I good now?"

"Yes, you are a good, sensible fellow, and have behaved nobly, and I honour you for it, and Claude shall come and see you every day."

That evening a note came from Scoutbush.

"DEAR MRS. MELLOT—Whom should I find when I went home, but Campbell? I told him all; and he says that you and everybody have done quite right, so I suppose you have; and that I am quite right in trying to get out to the East, so I shall do it. But the doctor says I must rest for six weeks at least. So Campbell has persuaded me to take the yacht, which is at Southampton, and go down to Aberalva, and then round to Snowdon, where I have a little slate-quarry, and get some fishing. Campbell is coming with me, and I wish Claude would come too. He knows that brother-in-law of mine, Vavasour, I think, and I shall go and make friends with him. I've got very merciful to foolish lovers lately, and Claude can help me to face him; for I am a little afraid of genuises, you know. So there we'll pick up my sister (she goes down by land this week), and then go on to Snowdon; and Claude can visit his old quarters at the Royal Oak at Bettws, where he and I had that jolly week among the painters. Do let him come, and beg La Signora not to be angry with me. That's all I'll ever ask of her again."

"Poor fellow! But I can't part with you, Claude."

"Let him," said La Cordifiamma. "He will comfort his lordship; and do you come with me."

"Come with you! Where!"

"I will tell you when Claude is gone."

"Claude, go and smoke in the garden. Now?"

"Come with me to Germany, Sabina."

"To Germany? Why on earth to Germany?"

"I—I only said Germany because it came first into my mind. Anywhere for rest; anywhere to be out of that poor man's way."

"He will not trouble you any more; and you will not surely throw up your engagement?"

"Of course not!" said she, half peevishly. "It will be over in a fortnight; and then I must have rest. Don't you see how I want rest?"

Sabina had seen it for some time past. That white cheek had been fading more and more to a wax-like paleness; those black eyes glittered with fierce unhealthy light; and dark rings round them told, not merely of late hours and excitement, but of wild passion and midnight tears. Sabina had seen all, and could not but give way, as Marie went on.

"I must have rest, I tell you! I am beginning—I can confess all to you—to want stimulants. I am beginning to long for brandy and water—pah!—to nerve me up to the excitement of acting, and then for morphine to make me sleep after it. The very eau de Cologne flask tempts me! They say that the fine ladies use it, before a ball, for other purposes than

scent. You would not like to see me commence that practice, would you?"

"There is no fear, dear."

"There is fear! You do not know the craving for exhilaration, the capability of self-indulgence, in our wild Tropic blood. Oh, Sabina, I feel at times that I could sink so low—that I could be so wicked, so utterly wicked, if I once began! Take me away, dearest creature, take me away, and let me have fresh air, and fair quiet scenes, and rest—rest—oh, save me, Sabina!" and she put her hands over her face, and burst into tears.

"We will go, then: to the Rhine, shall it be? I have not been there now for these three years, and it will be such fun running about the world by myself once more, and knowing all the while that——" and Sabina stopped; she did not like to remind Marie of the painful contrast between them.

"To the Rhine? Yes. And I shall see the beautiful old world, the old vineyards, and castles, and hills, which he used to tell me of—taught me to read of in those sweet, sweet books of Longfellow's! So gentle, and pure, and calm—so unlike me!"

"Yes, we will see them; and perhaps——"

Marie looked up at her, guessing her thoughts, and blushed scarlet.

"You, too, think then, that—that——" she could not finish her sentence.

Sabina stooped over her, and the two beautiful mouths met.

"There, darling, we need say nothing. We are both women, and can talk without words."

"Then you think there is hope!"

"Hope? Do you fancy that he is gone so very far? or that if he were, I could not hunt him out? Have I wandered half round the world alone for nothing?"

"No, but hope—hope that——"

"Not hope, but certainty; if some one I know had but courage."

"Courage—to do what!"

"To trust him utterly."

Marie covered her face with her hands, and shuddered in every limb.

"You know my story. Did I gain or lose by telling my Claude all?"

"I will!" she cried, looking up pale but firm. "I will!" and she looked steadfastly into the mirror over the chimney-piece, as if trying to court the reappearance of that ugly vision which haunted it, and so to nerve herself to the utmost, and face the whole truth.

In little more than a fortnight, Sabina and Marie, with maid and courier (for Marie was rich now), were away in the old Antwerpen. And Claude was rolling down to Southampton by rail, with Campbell, Scoutbush, and last, but not least, the faithful Bowie; who had under his charge what he described to the puzzled railway-guard as "goads and cleiks, and pirns and creels, and beuks and heuks, enough for a' the cods o' Neufundland."

CHAPTER XIII.

L'HOMME INCOMPRIS.

ELSLEY went on, between improved health and the fear of Tom Thurnall, a good deal better for the next month. He began to look forward to Valencia's visit with equanimity, and, at last, with interest; and was rather pleased than otherwise when, in the last week of July, a fly drove up to the gate of old Penalva Court, and he handed out therefrom Valencia, and Valencia's maid.

Lucia had discovered that the wind was east, and that she was afraid to go to the gate for fear of catching cold; her real purpose being, that Valencia should meet Elsley first.

"She is so impulsive," thought the good little creature, always plotting about her husband, "that she will rush upon me, and never see him for the first five minutes; and Elsley is so sensitive—how can he be otherwise, in his position, poor dear?" So she refrained herself, like Joseph, and stood at the door till Valencia was half-way down the garden-walk, having taken Elsley's somewhat shyly-offered arm; and then she could refrain herself no longer, and the

two women ran upon each other, and kissed, and sobbed, and talked, till Lucia was out of breath; but Valencia was not so easily silenced.

"My darling! and you are looking so much better than I expected; but not quite yourself yet. That naughty baby is killing you, I am sure! And Mr. Vavasour too, I shall begin to call him Elsley to-morrow, if I like him as much as I do now—but he is looking quite thin—wearing himself out with writing so many beautiful books,—that Wreck was perfect! And where are the children?—I must rush upstairs and devour them!—and what a delicious old garden! and clipt yews, too, so dark and romantic, and such dear old-fashioned flowers!—Mr. Vavasour must show me all over it, and over that hanging wood, too. What a duck of a place!—And oh, my dear, I am quite out of breath!"

And so she swept in, with her arm round Lucia's waist; while Elsley stood looking after her, well enough satisfied with her reception of him, and only hoping that the stream of words would slacken after a while.

"What a magnificent creature!" said he to himself. "Who could believe that the three years would make such a change!"

And he was right. The tall lithe girl had bloomed into full glory; and Valencia St. Just, though not delicately beautiful, was as splendid an Irish damsel as man need look upon, with a grand masque, aquiline features, luxuriant black hair, and—though it was the

fag-end of the London season—the unrivalled Irish complexion, as of the fair dame of Kilkenny, whose

> "Lips were like roses, her cheeks were the same,
> Like a dish of fresh strawberries smother'd in cream."

Her figure was perhaps too tall, and somewhat too stout also; but its size was relieved by the delicacy of those hands and feet of which Miss Valencia was most pardonably proud, and by that indescribable lissomeness and lazy grace which Irishwomen inherit, perhaps, with their tinge of southern blood; and when, in half an hour, she reappeared, with broad straw-hat, and gown tucked up *à la bergère* over the striped Welsh petticoat, perhaps to show off the ankles, which only looked the finer for a pair of heavy laced boots, Elsley honestly felt it a pleasure to look at her, and a still greater pleasure to talk to her, and to be talked to by her; while she, bent on making herself agreeable, partly from real good taste, partly from natural good-nature, and partly, too, because she saw in his eyes that he admired her, chatted sentiment about all heaven and earth.

For to Miss Valencia—it is sad to have to say it—admiration had been now, for three years, her daily bread. She had lived in the thickest whirl of the world, and, as most do for a while, found it a very pleasant place.

She had flirted—with how many must not be told; and perhaps with more than one with whom she had no business to flirt. Little Scoutbush had remonstrated with her on some such affair, but she had silenced

him with an Irish jest,—"You're a fisherman, Freddy; and when you can't catch salmon, you catch trout; and when you can't catch trout, you'll whip on the shallow for poor little gubbahawns, and say that it is all to keep your hand in—and so do I."

The old ladies said that this was the reason why she had not married; the men, however, asserted that no one dare marry her; and one club-oracle had given it as his opinion that no man in his rational senses was to be allowed to have anything to do with her, till she had been well jilted two or three times, to take the spirit out of her: but that catastrophe had not yet occurred, and Miss Valencia still reigned "triumphant and alone," though her aunt, old Lady Knockdown, moved all the earth, and some dirty places, too, below the earth, to get the wild Irish girl off her hands; "for," quoth she, "I feel with Valencia, indeed, just like one of those men who carry about little dogs in the Quadrant. I always pity the poor men so, and think how happy they must be when they have sold one. It is one chance less, you know, of having it bite them horribly, and then run away after all."

There was, however, no more real harm in Valencia, than there is in every child of Adam. Town frivolity had not corrupted her. She was giddy, given up to enjoyment of the present: but there was not a touch of meanness about her: and if she was selfish, as every one must needs be whose thoughts are of pleasure, admiration, and success, she was so uninten-

tionally; and she would have been shocked and pained at being told that she was anything but the most kind-hearted and generous creature on earth. Major Campbell, who was her Mentor as well as her brother's, had certainly told her so more than once; at which she had pouted a good deal, and cried a little, and promised to amend; then packed up a heap of cast-off things to send to Lucia—half of it much too fine to be of any use to the quiet little woman; and lastly, gone out and bought fresh finery for herself, and forgot all her good resolutions. Whereby it befell that she was tolerably deep in debt at the end of every season, and had to torment and kiss Scoutbush into paying her bills, which he did, like a good brother, and often before he had paid his own.

But, howsoever full Valencia's head may have been of fine garments and London flirtations, she had too much tact and good feeling to talk that evening of a world of which even Elsley knew more than her sister. For poor Lucia had been but eighteen at the time of her escapade, and had not been presented twelve months; so that she was as "inexperienced" as any one can be, who has only a husband, three children, and a household to manage on less than three hundred a year. Therefore Valencia talked only of things which would interest Elsley; asked him to read his last new poem—which, I need not say, he did; told him how she devoured everything he wrote; planned walks with him in the country; seemed to consult his pleasure in every way.

"To-morrow morning I shall sit with you and the children, Lucia; of course I must not interrupt Mr. Vavasour: but really in the afternoon I must ask him to spare a couple of hours from the Muses.

Vavasour was delighted to do anything—"Where would she walk?"

"Where? of course to see the beautiful school-mistress who saved the man from drowning; and then to see the chasm across which he was swept. I shall understand your poem so much better, you know, if I can but realise the people and the place. And you must take me to see Captain Willis, too, and even the Lieutenant—if he does not smell too much of brandy. I will be so gracious and civil, quite the lady of the castle."

"You will make quite a royal progress," said Lucia, looking at her with sisterly admiration.

"Yes, I intend to usurp as many of Scoutbush's honours as I can till he comes. I must lay down the sceptre in a fortnight, you know, so I shall make as much use of it as I can meanwhile."

And so on, and so on; meaning all the while to put Elsley quite at his ease, and let him understand that bygones were bygones, and that with her any reconciliation at all was meant to be a complete one; which was wise and right enough. But Valencia had not counted on the excitable and vain nature with which she was dealing; and Lucia, who had her own fears from the first evening, was the last person in the world to tell her of it; first from pride in herself,

and then from pride in her husband. For even if a woman has made a foolish match, it is hard to expect her to confess as much: and, after all, a husband is a husband, and let his faults be what they might, he was still her Elsley; her idol once; and perhaps (so she hoped) her idol again hereafter, and if not, still he was her husband, and that was enough.

"By which you mean, sir, that she considers herself bound to endure everything and anything from him, simply because she had been married to him in church?"

Yes, and a great deal more. Not merely being married in church; but what being married in church means, and what every woman who is a woman understands; and lives up to without flinching, though she die a martyr for it, or a confessor; a far higher saint, if the truth was known, as it will be some day, than all the holy virgins who ever fasted and prayed in a convent since the days when Macarius first turned fakeer. For to a true woman, the mere fact of a man's being her husband, put it on the lowest ground that you choose, is utterly sacred, divine, all-powerful; in the might of which she can conquer self in a way which is an everyday miracle; and the man who does not feel about the mere fact of a woman's having given herself utterly to him, just what she herself feels about it, ought to be despised by all his fellows;—were it not that, in that case, it would be necessary to despise more human beings than is safe for the soul of any man.

That fortnight was the sunniest which Elsley had passed, since he made secret love to Lucia in Eaton Square. Romantic walks, the company of a beautiful woman as ready to listen as she was to talk, free licence to pour out all his fancies, sure of admiration, if not of flattery, and pardonably satisfied vanity—all these are comfortable things for most men, who have nothing better to comfort them. But, on the whole, this feast did not make Elsley a better or a wiser man at home. Why should it? Is a boy's digestion improved by turning him loose into a confectioner's shop? And thus the contrast between what he chose to call Valencia's sympathy, and Lucia's want of sympathy, made him, unfortunately, all the more cross to her when they were alone; and who could blame the poor little woman for saying one night, angrily enough:

"Ah, yes! Valencia,—Valencia is imaginative—Valencia understands you—Valencia sympathises—Valencia thinks . . Valencia has no children to wash and dress, no accounts to keep, no linen to mend—Valencia's back does not ache all day long, so that she would be glad enough to lie on the sofa from morning till night, if she was not forced to work whether she can work or not. No, no; don't kiss me, for kisses will not make up for injustice, Elsley. I only trust that you will not tempt me to hate my own sister. No: don't talk to me now, let me sleep if I can sleep; and go and walk and talk sentiment with Valencia to-morrow, and leave the poor little brood hen to sit

on her nest, and be despised." And refusing all Elsley's entreaties for pardon, she sulked herself to sleep.

Who can blame her? If there is one thing more provoking than another to a woman, it is to see her husband Strass-engel, Haus-teufel, an angel of courtesy to every woman but herself; to see him in society all smiles and good stories, the most amiable and self-restraining of men; perhaps to be complimented on his agreeableness: and to know all the while that he is penning up all the accumulated ill-temper of the day, to let it out on her when they get home; perhaps in the very carriage as soon as it leaves the door. Hypocrites that you are, some of you gentlemen! Why cannot the act against cruelty to women, corporal punishment included, be brought to bear on such as you? And yet, after all, you are not most to blame in the matter: Eve herself tempts you, as at the beginning; for who does not know that the man is a thousand times vainer than the woman? He does but follow the analogy of all nature. Look at the Red Indian, in that blissful state of nature from which (so philosophers inform those who choose to believe them) we all sprang. Which is the boaster, the strutter, the bedizener of his sinful carcase with feathers and beads, fox-tails and bears' claws,—the brave, or his poor little squaw? An Australian settler's wife bestows on some poor slaving gin a cast-off French bonnet; before she has gone a hundred yards, her husband snatches it off, puts it on his own

mop, quiets her for its loss with a tap of the waddie, and struts on in glory. Why not? Has he not the analogy of all nature on his side? Have not the male birds and the male moths, the fine feathers, while the females go soberly about in drab and brown? Does the lioness, or the lion, rejoice in the grandeur of a mane; the hind, or the stag, in antlered pride? How know we but that, in some more perfect and natural state of society, the women will dress like so many quakeresses; while the frippery shops will become the haunts of men alone, and "browches, pearls and owches" be consecrate to the nobler sex? There are signs already, in the dress of our young gentlemen, of such a return to the law of nature from the present absurd state of things, in which the human peahens carry about the gaudy trains which are the peacocks' right.

For there is a secret feeling in woman's heart that she is in her wrong place; that it is she who ought to worship the man, and not the man her; and when she becomes properly conscious of her destiny, has not he a right to be conscious of his? If the grey hens will stand round in the mire clucking humble admiration, who can blame the old blackcock for dancing and drumming on the top of a moss hag, with outspread wings and flirting tail, glorious and self-glorifying. He is a splendid fellow; and he was made splendid for some purpose surely? Why did Nature give him his steel-blue coat, and his crimson crest, but for the very same purpose that she gave Mr. A * * * his intellect

—to be admired by the other sex? And if young damsels, overflowing with sentiment and Ruskinism, will crowd round him, ask his opinion of this book and that picture, treasure his bon-mots, beg for his autograph, looking all the while the praise which they do not speak (though they speak a good deal of it), and when they go home write letters to him on matters about which in old times girls used to ask only their mothers;—who can blame him if he finds the little wife at home a very uninteresting body, whose head is so full of petty cares and gossip, that he and all his talents are quite unappreciated? *Les femmes incomprises* of France used to (perhaps do now) form a class of married ladies, whose sorrows were especially dear to the novelists, male or female; but what are their woes compared to those of *l'homme incompris?* What higher vocation for a young maiden than to comfort the martyr during his agonies? And, most of all, where the sufferer is not merely a genius, but a saint; persecuted, perhaps, abroad by vulgar tradesmen and Philistine bishops, and snubbed at home by a stupid wife, who is quite unable to appreciate his magnificent projects for regenerating all heaven and earth; and only, humdrum, practical creature that she is, tries to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with her God? Fly to his help, all pious maidens, and pour into the wounded heart of the holy man the healing balm of self-conceit; cover his table with confidential letters, choose him as your father-confessor, and lock yourself up alone with him

for an hour or two every week, while the wife is mending his shirts upstairs.—True, you may break the stupid wife's heart by year-long misery, as she slaves on, bearing the burden and heat of the day, of which you never dream; keeping the wretched man, by her unassuming good example, from making a fool of himself three times a week; and sowing the seed of which you steal the fruit. What matter? If your immortal soul requires it, what matter what it costs her carnal heart? She will suffer in silence; at least, she will not tell you. You think she does not understand you. Well;—and she thinks in return that you do not understand her, and her married joys and sorrows, and her five children, and her butcher's bills, and her long agony of fear for the husband of whom she is ten times more proud than you could be; for whom she has slaved for years; whose defects she has tried to cure, while she cured her own; for whom she would die to-morrow, did he fall into disgrace, when you had flounced off to find some new idol: and so she will not tell you: and what the ear heareth not, that the heart grieveth not.—Go on and prosper! You may, too, ruin the man's spiritual state by vanity; you may pamper his discontent with the place where God has put him, till he ends by flying off to "some purer Communion," and taking you with him. Never mind. He is a most delightful person, and his intercourse is so improving. Why were sweet things made, but to be eaten? Go on and prosper.

"Ah, young ladies, if some people had (as it is per-

haps well for them that they have not) the ordering of this same British nation, they would certainly follow your example, and try to restore various ancient institutions. And first among them would be that very ancient institution of the cucking-stool; to be employed however, not as of old, against married scolds (for whom those who have been behind the scenes have all respect and sympathy), but against unmarried prophetesses, who, under whatsoever high pretence of art or religion, flirt with their neighbours' husbands, be they parson or poet.

Not, be it understood, that Valencia had the least suspicion that Elsley considered himself "incompris." If he had hinted the notion to her, she would have resented it as an insult to the St. Justs in general, and to her sister in particular; and would have said something to him in her off-hand way, the like whereof he had seldom heard, even from adverse reviewers.

Elsley himself soon divined enough of her character to see that he must keep his sorrows to himself, if he wished for Valencia's good opinion; and soon,—so easily does a vain man lend himself to meanness—he found himself trying to please Valencia, by praising to her the very woman with whom he was discontented. He felt shocked and ashamed when first his own baseness flashed across him: but the bait was too pleasant to be left easily: and, after all, he was trying to say to his guest what he knew his guest would like; and what was that but following those very rules of good society, for breaking which Lucia was always calling

him gauche and morose? So he actually quieted his own conscience by the fancy that he was bound to be civil, and to keep up appearances, "even for Lucia's sake," said the self-deceiver to himself. And thus the mischief was done; and the breach between Lucia and her husband, which had been somewhat bridged over during the last month or two, opened more wide than ever, without a suspicion on Valencia's part that she was doing all she could to break her sister's heart.

She, meanwhile, had plenty of reasons which justified her new intimacy to herself. How could she better please Lucia? How better show that bygones were to be bygones, and that Elsley was henceforth to be considered as one of the family, than by being as intimate as possible with him? What matter how intimate? For, after all, he was only a brother, and she his sister.

She had law on her side in that last argument, as well as love of amusement. Whether she had either common sense or Scripture, is a very different question.

Poor Lucia, too, tried to make the best of the matter; and to take the new intimacy as Valencia would have had her take it, in the light of a compliment to herself; and so, in her pride, she said to Valencia, and told her that she should love her for ever for her kindness to Elsley, while her heart was ready to burst.

But ere the fortnight was over the Nemesis had come, and Lucia, woman as she was, could not repress

a thrill of malicious joy, even though Elsley became more intolerable than ever at the change.

What was the Nemesis, then?

Simply that this naughty Miss St. Just began to smile upon Frank Headley the curate, even as she had smiled upon Elsley Vavasour.

It was very naughty; but she had her excuses. She had found Elsley out; and it was well for both of them that she had done so. Already, upon the strength of their supposed relationship, she had allowed him to talk a great deal more nonsense to her,—harmless perhaps, but nonsense still,—than she would have listened to from any other man; and it was well for both of them that Elsley was a man without self-control who began to show the weak side of his character freely enough, as soon as he became at ease with his companion, and excited by conversation. Valencia quickly saw that he was vain as a peacock, and weak enough to be led by her in any and every direction, when she chose to work on his vanity. And she despised him accordingly, and suspected, too, that her sister could not be very happy with such a man.

None are more quick than sisters-in-law to see faults in the brother-in-law, when once they have begun to look for them; and Valencia soon remarked that Elsley showed Lucia no *petits soins*, while he was ready enough to show them to her; that he took no real trouble about his children, or about anything else; and twenty more faults, which she might have per-

ceived in the first two days of her visit, if she had not been in such a hurry to amuse herself. But she was too delicate to ask Lucia the truth, and contented herself with watching all parties closely, and in amusing herself meanwhile—for amusement she must have—in

"Breaking a country heart
For pastime, ere she went to town."

She had met Frank several times about the parish and in the schools, and had been struck at once with his grace and high breeding, and with that air of melancholy which is always interesting in a true woman's eyes. She had seen, too, that Elsley tried to avoid him, naturally enough not wishing an intrusion on their pleasant *têtes-à-tête*. Whereon, half to spite Elsley, and half to show her own right to chat with whom she chose, she made Lucia ask Frank to tea; and next contrived to go to the school when he was teaching there, and to make Elsley ask him to walk with them; and all the more, because she had discovered that Elsley had discontinued his walks with Frank, as soon as she had appeared at Penalva.

Lucia was not sorry to countenance her in her naughtiness; it was a comfort to her to have a fourth person in the room at times, and thus to compel Elsley and Valencia to think of something beside each other; and when she saw her sister gradually transferring her favours from the married to the unmarried victim, she would have been more than woman if she had not rejoiced thereat. Only, she began soon to be afraid for Frank, and at last told Valencia so.

"Do take care that you do not break his heart!"

"My dear! You forget that I sit under Mr. O'Blareaway, and am to him as a heathen and a publican. Fresh from St. Nepomuc's as he is, he would as soon think of falling in love with an 'Oirish Prodestant,' as with a malignant and a turbaned Turk. Besides, my dear, if the mischief is going to be done, it's done already."

"I dare say it is, you naughty beautiful thing. If anybody is goose enough to fall in love with you, he'll be also goose enough, I don't doubt, to do so at first sight. There, don't look perpetually in that glass: but take care!"

"What use? If it is going to happen at all, I say, it has happened already; so I shall just please myself, as usual."

And it had happened: and poor Frank had been, ever since the first day he saw Valencia, over head and ears in love. His time had come, and there was no escaping his fate.

But to escape he tried. Convinced, with many good men of all ages and creeds, that a celibate life was the fittest one for a clergyman, he had fled from St. Nepomuc's into the wilderness to avoid temptation, and beheld at his cell-door a fairer fiend than ever came to St. Dunstan. A fairer fiend, no doubt; for St. Dunstan's imagination created his temptress for him, but Valencia was a reality: and fact and nature may be safely backed to produce something more charming than any monk's brain can do. One questions whether

St. Dunstan's apparition was not something as coarse as his own mind, clever though that mind was. At least, he would never have had the heart to apply the hot tongs to such a nose as Valencia's, but at most have bowed her out pityingly, as Frank tried to bow out Valencia from the sacred place of his heart, but failed.

Hard he tried, and humbly too. He had no proud contempt for married parsons. He was ready enough to confess, that he, too, might be weak in that respect, as in a hundred others. He conceived that he had no reason, from his own inner life, to believe himself worthy of any higher vocation—proving his own real nobleness of soul by that very humility. He had rather not marry. He might do so some day: but he would sacrifice much to avoid the necessity. If he was weak, he would use what strength he had to the uttermost ere he yielded. And all the more, because he felt, and reasonably enough, that Valencia was the last woman in the world to make a parson's wife. He had his ideal of what such a wife should be, if she were to be allowed to exist at all—the same ideal which Mr. Paget has drawn in his charming little book (would that all parsons' wives would read and perpend), the "Owlet of Owlstone Edge." But Valencia would surely not make a Beatrice. Beautiful she was, glorious, lovable, but not the helpmeet whom he needed. And he fought against the new dream like a brave man. He fasted, he wept, he prayed: but his prayers seemed not to be heard. Valencia

seemed to have enthroned herself, a true Venus victrix, in the centre of his heart, and would not be dispossessed. He tried to avoid seeing her: but even for that he had not strength: he went again and again when asked, only to come home more miserable each time, as fierce against himself and his own weakness as if he had given way to wine or to oaths. In vain, too, he represented to himself the ridiculous hopelessness of his passion; the impossibility of the London beauty ever stooping to marry the poor country curate. Fancies would come in, how such things, strange as they might seem, had happened already; might happen again. It was a class of marriages for which he had always felt a strong dislike, even suspicion and contempt; and though he was far more fitted, in family as well as personal excellence, for such a match, than three out of four who make them, yet he shrank with disgust from the notion of being himself classed at last among the match-making parsons. Whether there was "carnal pride" or not in that last thought, his soul so loathed it, that he would gladly have thrown up his cure at Aberalva; and would have done so actually, but for one word which Tom Thurnall had spoken to him, and that was—Cholera.

That the cholera might come; that it probably would come, in the course of the next two months, was news to him which was enough to keep him at his post, let what would be the consequence. And gradually he began to see a way out of his difficulty —and a very simple one; and that was, to die.

"That is the solution after all," said he. "I am not strong enough for God's work: but I will not shrink from it, if I can help. If I cannot master it, let it kill me; so at least I may have peace. I have failed utterly here: all my grand plans have crumbled to ashes between my fingers. I find myself a cumberer of the ground, where I fancied that I was going forth like a very Michael—fool that I was!—leader of the armies of heaven. And now, in the one remaining point on which I thought myself strong, I find myself weakest of all. Useless and helpless! I have one chance left, one chance to show these poor souls that I really love them, really wish their good—Selfish that I am! What matter whether I do show it or not? What need to justify myself to them? Self, self, creeping in everywhere! I shall begin next, I suppose, longing for the cholera to come, that I may show off myself in it, and make spiritual capital out of their dying agonies! Ah me! that it were all over!—That this cholera, if it is to come, would wipe out of this head what I verily believe nothing but death will do!" And therewith Frank laid his head on the table, and cried till he could cry no more.

It was not over manly: but he was weakened with overwork and sorrow: and, on the whole, it was perhaps the best thing he could do; for he fell asleep there, with his head on the table, and did not wake till the dawn blazed through his open window.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOCTOR AT BAY.

DID you ever, in a feverish dream, climb a mountain which grew higher and higher as you climbed; and scramble through passages which changed perpetually before you, and up and down break-neck stairs which broke off perpetually behind you? Did you ever spend the whole night, foot in stirrup, mounting that phantom hunter which never gets mounted, or, if he does, turns into a pen between your knees; or in going to fish that phantom stream which never gets fished? Did you ever, late for that mysterious dinner-party in some enchanted castle, wander disconsolately, in unaccountable rags and dirt, in search of that phantom carpet-bag which never gets found? Did you ever "realise" to yourself the sieve of the Danaides, the stone of Sisyphus, the wheel of Ixion; the pleasure of shearing that domestic animal who (according to the experience of a very ancient observer of nature) produces more cry than wool; the perambulation of that Irishman's model bog, where you slip two steps backward for one forward, and must, therefore, in order to progress at all, turn your face home-

ward, and progress as a pig does into a steamer, by going the opposite way? Were you ever condemned to spin ropes of sand to all eternity, like Tregeagle the wrecker; or to extract the cube roots of a million or two of hopeless surds, like the mad mathematician; or last, and worst of all, to work the Nuisances Removal Act? Then you can enter, as a man and a brother, into the sorrows of Tom Thurnall, in the months of June and July, 1854.

He had made up his mind, for certain good reasons of his own, that the cholera ought to visit Aberalva in the course of the summer; and, of course, tried his best to persuade people to get ready for their ugly visitor: but in vain. The cholera come there? Why, it never had come yet, which signified, when he inquired a little more closely, that there had been only one or two doubtful cases in 1837, and five or six in 1849. In vain he answered, "Very well; and is not that a proof that the causes of cholera are increasing here? If you had one case the first time, and five times as many the next, by the same rule you will have five times as many more if it comes this summer."

"Nonsense! Aberalva was the healthiest town on the coast."

"Well but," would Tom say, "in the census before last, you had a population of 1300 in 112 houses, and that was close packing enough, in all conscience: and in the last census I find you had a population of over 1400, which must have increased since; and

there are eight or nine old houses in the town pulled down, or turned into stores; so you are more closely packed than ever. And mind, it may seem no very great difference; but it is the last drop that fills the cup."

What had that to do with cholera? And more than one gave him to understand that he must be either a very silly or a very impertinent person, to go poking into how many houses there were in the town, and how many people lived in each. Tardrew, the steward, indeed, said openly, that Mr. Thurnall was making disturbance enough in people's property up at Pentremochyn, without bothering himself with Aberalva too. He had no opinion of people who had a finger in everybody's pie. Whom Tom tried to soothe with honeyed words, knowing him to be of the original British bulldog breed, which, once stroked against the hair, shows his teeth at you for ever afterwards.

But staunch was Tardrew, unfortunately on the wrong side; and backed by the collective ignorance, pride, laziness, and superstition of Aberalva, showed to his new assailant that terrible front of stupidity, against which, says Schiller, "the gods themselves fight in vain."

"Does he think we was all fools afore he came here?"

That was the rallying cry of the Conservative party, worshippers of Baalzebub, god of flies, and of that (so say Syrian scholars) from which flies are bred. And, indeed, there were excuses for them, on the

Yankee ground, that "there's a deal of human natur' in man." It is hard to human nature to make all the humiliating confessions which must precede sanitary repentance; to say, "I have been a very nasty, dirty fellow. I have lived contented in evil smells, till I care for them no more than my pig does. I have refused to understand Nature's broadest hints, that anything which is so disagreeable is not meant to be left about. I have probably been more or less the cause of half my own illnesses, and of three-fourths of the illness of my children; for aught I know, it is very much my fault that my own baby has died of scarlatina, and two or three of my tenants of typhus. No, hang it! that's too much to make any man confess to! I'll prove my innocence by not reforming!" So sanitary reform is thrust out of sight, simply because its necessity is too humiliating to the pride of all, too frightful to the consciences of many.

"Tom went to Trebooze.

"Mr. Trebooze, you are a man of position in the county, and own some houses in Aberalva. Don't you think you could use your influence in this matter?"

"Own some houses? Yes,"—and Mr. Trebooze consigned the said cottages to a variety of unmentionable places; "cost me more in rates than they bring in in rent, even if I get the rent paid. I should like to get a six-pounder, and blow the whole lot into the sea. Cholera coming, eh? D'ye think it will be there before Michaelmas?"

"I do."

"Pity I can't clear 'em out before Michaelmas. Else I'd have ejected the lot, and pulled the houses down."

"I think something should be done meanwhile, though, towards cleansing them."

"* * * Let 'em cleanse them themselves! Soap's cheap enough with your * * * free trade, ain't it! No, sir! That sort of talk will do well enough for my Lord Minchampstead, sir, the old money-lending Jew! * * * but gentlemen, sir, gentlemen, that are half-ruined with free trade, and your Whig policy, sir, you must give 'em back their rights before they can afford to throw away their money on cottages. Cottages, indeed! * * * upstart of a cotton-spinner, coming down here, buying the lands over our heads, and pretends to show us how to manage our estates; old families that have been in the county this four hundred years, with the finest peasantry in the world ready to die for them, sir, till these new revolutionary doctrines came in—Pride and purse-proud conceit, just to show off his money! What do they want with better cottages than their fathers had? Only put notions into their heads, raise 'em above their station; more they have, more they'll want. * * * sir, make chartists of 'em all before he's done! I'll tell you what, sir,"—and Mr. Trebooze attempted a dignified and dogmatic tone—"I never told it you before, because you were my very good friend, sir: but my opinion is, sir, that by what you're doing up at Pen-

tremochyn, you're just spreading chartism—chartism, sir! Of course I know nothing. Of course I'm nobody, in these days: but that's my opinion, sir, and you've got it!"

By which motion Tom took little. Mighty is envy always, and mighty ignorance: but you become aware of their truly Titanic grandeur only when you attempt to touch their owner's pocket.

Tom tried old Heale: but took as little in that quarter. Heale had heard of sanitary reform, of course; but he knew nothing about it, and gave a general assent to Tom's doctrines, for fear of exposing his own ignorance: acting on them was a very different matter. It is always hard for an old medical man to confess that anything has been discovered since the days of his youth; and beside, there were other reasons behind, which Heale tried to avoid giving; and therefore fenced off, and fenced off, till, pressed hard by Tom, wrath came forth, and truth with it.

"And what be you thinking of, sir, to expect me to offend all my best patients? and not one of 'em but rents some two cottages, some a dozen. And what'll they say to me if I go a routing and rookling in their drains, like an old sow by the wayside, beside putting 'em to all manner of expense? And all on the chance of this cholera coming, which I have no faith in, nor in this new-fangled sanitary reform neither, which is all a dodge for a lot of young Government puppies to fill their pockets, and rule and ride over us: and my opinion always was with the Bible, that 'tis jidgment,

sir, a jidgment of God, and we can't escape His holy will, and that's the plain truth of it."

Tom made no answer to that latter argument. He had heard that "'tis jidgment" from every mouth during the last few days; and had mortally offended the Brianite preacher that very morning, by answering his "'tis jidgment" with—

"But, my good sir! the Bible, I thought, says that Aaron stayed the plague among the Israelites, and David the one at Jerusalem."

"Sir, those was miracles, sir! and they was under the Law, sir, and we'm under the Gospel, you'll be pleased to remember."

"Humph!" said Tom, "then, by your showing, they were better off under the Law than we are now, if they could have their plagues stopped by miracles; and we cannot have ours stopped at all."

"Sir, be you an infidel?"

To which there was no answer to be made.

In this case, Tom answered Heale with—

"But, my dear sir, if you don't like (as is reasonable enough) to take the responsibility on yourself, why not go to the Board of Guardians, and get them to put the Act in force?"

"Boord, sir? and do you know so little of Boords as that? Why, there ain't one of them but owns cottages themselves, and it's as much as my place is worth——"

"Your place as medical officer is just worth nothing, as you know; you'll have been out of pocket by it

seven or eight pounds this year, even if no cholera comes."

Tom knew the whole state of the case; but he liked tormenting Heale now and then.

"Well, sir! but if I get turned out next year, in steps that Drew over at Carcarrow Churchtown into my district, and into the best of my practice, too. I wonder what sort of a Poor Law district you were medical officer of, if you don't know yet that that's why we take to the poor."

"My dear sir, I know it, and a good deal more beside."

"Then why go bothering me this way?"

"Why," said Tom, "it's pleasant to have old notions confirmed as often as possible—

> "'Life is a jest, and all things show it;
> I thought so once, but now I know it.'

What an ass the fellow must have been who had that put on his tombstone, not to have found it out many a year before he died!"

He went next to Headley the curate, and took little by that move; though more than by any other.

For Frank already believed his doctrines, as an educated London parson of course would; was shocked to hear that they were likely to become fact so soon and so fearfully; offered to do all he could: but confessed that he could do nothing.

"I have been hinting to them, ever since I came, improvements in cleanliness, in ventilation, and so forth: but I have been utterly unheeded: and bully

me as you will, Doctor, about my cramming doctrines down their throats, and roaring like a Pope's bull, I assure you that, on sanitary reform, my roaring was as of a sucking dove, and ought to have prevailed, if soft persuasion can."

"You were a dove where you ought to have been a bull, and a bull where you ought to have been a dove. But roar now, if ever you roared, in the pulpit and out. Why not preach to them on it next Sunday?"

"Well, I'd give a lecture gladly, if I could get any one to come and hear it; but that you could do better than me."

"I'll lecture them myself, and show them bogies, if my quarter-inch will do its work. If they want seeing to believe, see they shall; I have half-a-dozen specimens of water already which will astonish them. Let me lecture, you must preach."

"You must know, that there is a feeling,—you would call it a prejudice,—against introducing such purely secular subjects into the pulpit."

Tom gave a long whistle.

"Pardon me, Mr. Headley; you are a man of sense; and I can speak to you as one human being to another, which I have seldom been able to do with your respected cloth."

"Say on; I shall not be frightened."

"Well, don't you put up the Ten Commandments in your Church?"

"Yes."

"And don't one of them run: 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"Well?"

"And is not murder a moral offence—what you call a sin?"

"*Sans doute.*"

"If you saw your parishioners in the habit of cutting each other's throats, or their own, shouldn't you think that a matter spiritual enough to be a fit subject for a little of the drum ecclesiastic?"

"Well?"

"Well? Ill! There are your parishioners about to commit wholesale murder and suicide, and is that a secular question? If they don't know the fact, is not that all the more reason for your telling them of it? You pound away, as I warned you once, at the sins of which they are just as well aware as you; why on earth do you hold your tongue about the sins of which they are not aware? You tell us every Sunday that we do Heaven only knows how many more wrong things than we dream of. Tell it us again now. Don't strain at gnats like want of faith and resignation, and swallow such a camel as twenty or thirty deaths. It's no concern of mine; I've seen plenty of people murdered, and may again: I am accustomed to it; but if it's not your concern, what on earth you are here for is more than I can tell."

"You are right—you are right; but how to put it on religious grounds——"

Tom whistled again.

"If your doctrines cannot be made to fit such plain matters as twenty deaths, *tant pis pour eux*. If they have nothing to say on such scientific facts, why the facts must take care of themselves, and the doctrines may, for aught I care, go and—— But I won't be really rude. Only think over the matter. If you are God's minister, you ought to have something to say about God's view of a fact which certainly involves the lives of his creatures, not by twos and threes, but by tens of thousands."

So Frank went home, and thought it through; and went once and again to Thurnall, and condescended to ask his opinion of what he had said, and whether he said ill or well. What Thurnall answered was—"Whether that's sound Church doctrine is your business; but if it be, I'll say with the man there in the Acts—what was his name?—'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'"

"Would God that you were one! for you would make a right good one."

"Humph! at least you see what you can do, if you'll only face fact as it stands, and talk about the realities of life. I'll puff your sermon beforehand, I assure you, and bring all I can to hear it."

So Frank preached a noble sermon, most rational, and most spiritual withal; but he, too, like his tutor, took little by his motion.

All the present fruit upon which he had to congratulate himself was, that the Brianite preacher denounced him in chapel next Sunday as a German

Rationalist, who impiously pretended to explain away the Lord's visitation into a carnal matter of drains, and pipes, and gases, and such like; and that his rival of another denomination, who was a fanatic on the teetotal question, denounced him as bitterly for supporting the cause of drunkenness, by attributing cholera to want of cleanliness, while all rational people knew that its true source was intemperance. Poor Frank! he had preached against drunkenness many a time and oft: but because he would not add a Mohammedan eleventh commandment to those ten which men already find difficulty enough in keeping, he was set upon at once by a fanatic whose game it was—as it is that of too many—to snub sanitary reform, and hinder the spread of plain scientific truth, for the sake of pushing their own nostrum for all human ills.

In despair, Tom went off to Elsley Vavasour. Would he help? Would he join, as one of two householders, in making a representation to the proper authorities?

Elsley had never mixed in local matters: and if he had, he knew nothing of how to manage men, or to read an Act of Parliament; so, angry as Tom was inclined to be with him, he found it useless to quarrel with a man so utterly unpractical, who would, probably, had he been stirred into exertion, have done more harm than good.

"Only come with me, and satisfy yourself as to the existence of one of these nuisances, and then you will have grounds on which to go," said Tom, who

had still hopes of making a cat's-paw of Elsley, and by his power over him, pulling the strings from behind.

Sorely against his will, Elsley went, saw, and smelt; came home again; was very unwell; and was visited nightly for a week after that by that most disgusting of all phantoms, sanitary nightmare; which some who have worked in the foul places of the earth know but too well. Evidently his health could not stand it. There was no work to be got out of him in that direction.

"Would he write, then, and represent matters to Lord Scoutbush?"

How could he? He did not know the man; not a line had ever been exchanged between them. Their relations were so very peculiar. It would seem sheer impertinence on his part to interfere with the management of Lord Scoutbush's property. Really there was a great deal to be said, Tom felt, for poor Elsley's dislike of meddling in that quarter.

"Would Mrs. Vavasour write, then?"

"For Heaven's sake do not mention it to her. She would be so terrified about the children; she is worn out with anxiety already,"—and so forth.

Tom went back to Frank Headley.

"You see a good deal of Miss St. Just."

"I?—No—why?—what?" said poor Frank, blushing.

"Only that you must make her write to her brother about this cholera."

"My dear fellow, it is such a subject for a lady to meddle with."

"It has no scruple in meddling with ladies; so ladies ought to have none in meddling with it. You must do it as delicately as you will: but done it must be: it is our only chance. Tell her of Tardrew's obstinacy, or Scoutbush will go by his opinion; and tell her to keep the secret from her sister."

Frank did it, and well. Valencia was horror-struck, and wrote.

Scoutbush was away at sea, nobody knew where; and a full fortnight elapsed before an answer came.

"My dear, you are quite mistaken if you think I can do anything. Nine-tenths of the houses in Aberalva are not in my hands; but copyholds and long leases, over which I have no power. If the people will complain to me of any given nuisance, I'll right it if I can; and if the doctor wants money, and sees any ways of laying it out well, he shall have what he wants, though I am very high in Queer Street just now, ma'am, having paid your bills before I left town, like a good brother: but I tell you again, I have no more power than you have, except over a few cottages, and Tardrew assured me, three weeks ago, that they were as comfortable as they ever had been."

So Tardrew had forestalled Thurnall in writing to the Viscount. Well, there was one more chance to be tried.

Tom gave his lecture in the school-room. He

showed them magnified abominations enough to frighten all the children into fits, and dilated on horrors enough to spoil all appetites: he proved to them that, though they had the finest water in the world all over the town, they had contrived to poison almost every drop of it; he waxed eloquent, witty, sarcastic; and the net result was a general grumble.

"How did he get hold of all the specimens, as he calls them? What business has he poking his nose down people's wells and waterbutts?"

But an unexpected ally arose at this juncture, in the coast-guard lieutenant, who, being valiant after his evening's brandy-and-water, rose and declared, "that Dr. Thurnall was a very clever man; that by what he'd seen himself in the West Indies, it was all as true as gospel; that the parish might have the cholera if it liked,"—and here a few expletives occurred,—"but that he'd see that the coast-guard houses were put to rights at once; for he would not have the lives of Her Majesty's servants endangered by such dirty tricks, not fit for heathen savages," etc. etc.

Tom struck while the iron was hot. He saw that the great man's speech had produced an impression.

"Would he" (so he asked the lieutenant privately) "get some one to join him, and present a few of these nuisances?"

He would do anything in his contempt for "a lot of long-shore merchant-skippers and herringers, who went about calling themselves captains, and fancy

themselves, sir, as good as if they wore the Queen's uniform!"

"Well, then, can't we find another householder—some cantankerous dog who don't mind a row?"

Yes, the cantankerous dog was found, in the person of Mr. John Penruddock, coal-merchant, who had quarrelled with Tardrew, because Tardrew said he gave short weight—which he very probably did—and had quarrelled also with Thomas Beer, senior, ship-builder, about right of passage through a back-yard.

Mr. Penruddock suddenly discovered that Mr. Beer kept up a dirt-heap in the said back-yard, and with virtuous indignation vowed "he'd sarve the old beggar out at last."

So far so good. The weapons of reason and righteousness having failed, Tom felt at liberty to borrow the devil's tools. Now to pack a vestry, and to nominate a local committee.

The vestry was packed; the committee nominated: of course half of them refused to act—they "didn't want to go quarrelling with their neighbours."

Tom explained to them cunningly and delicately that they would have nothing to do; that one or two (he did not say that he was the one, and the two also) would do all the work, and bear all the odium; whereon the malcontents subsided, considering it likely that, after all, nothing would be done.

Some may fancy that matters were now getting somewhat settled. Those who do so know little of the charming machinery of local governments. One

man has "summat to say,"—utterly irrelevant. Another must needs answer him with something equally irrelevant; a long chatter ensues, in spite of all cries to order and question. Soon one and another gets personal, and temper shows here and there. You would fancy that the go-ahead party try to restore order, and help business on. Not in the least. They have begun to cool a little. They are a little afraid that they have committed themselves. If people quarrel with each other, perhaps they may quarrel with them too. And they begin to be wonderfully patient and impartial, in the hope of staving off the evil day, and finding some excuse for doing nothing after all. "Hear 'mun out!" . . . "Vair and zoft, let ev'ry man ha' his zay!" . . . "There's vary gude rason in it!" . . . "I didn't think of that avore;"—and so forth; till in a quarter of an hour the whole question has to be discussed over again, through the fog of a dozen fresh fallacies, and the miserable earnest man finds himself considerably worse off than when he began. Happy for him if some chance word is not let drop, which will afford the whole assembly an excuse for falling on him open-mouthed, as the cause of all their woes!

That chance word came. Mr. Penruddock gave a spiteful hit, being, as he said, of a cantankerous turn, to Mr. Treluddra, principal "jowder," *i.e.* fish salesman, of Aberalva. Whereon Treluddra, whose conscience told him that there was at present in his back-yard a cartload and more of fish in every stage

of putrefaction, which he had kept rotting there rather than lower the market-price, rose in wrath.

"An' if any committee puts its noz into my back-yard, if it doant get the biggest cod's innards as I can collar hold on, about its ears, my name is not Treluddra! A man's house is his castle, says I, and them as takes up with any o' this open-day burglary, for it's nothing less, has to do wi' me, that's all, and them as knows their interest, knows me!"

Terrible were these words; for old Treluddra, like most jowders, combined the profession of money-lender with that of salesman; and there were dozens in the place who were in debt to him for money advanced to buy boats and nets, after wreck and loss. Besides, to offend one jowder was to offend all. They combined to buy the fish at any price they chose: if angered, they would combine now and then not to buy it at all.

"You old twenty per cent rascal," roared the Lieutenant, "after making a fortune out of these poor fellows' mishaps, do you want to poison 'em all with your stinking fish?"

"I say, Lieutenant," says old Beer, whose son owed Treluddra fifty pounds at that moment, "fair's fair. You mind your Coastguard, and we'm mind our trade. We'm free fishermen, by charter and right; you'm not our master, and you shall know it."

"Know it?" says the Lieutenant, foaming.

"Iss; you put your head inside my presences, and I'll split mun open, if I be hanged for it."

"You split my head open?"

"Iss, by——." And the old grey-bearded sea-king set his arms akimbo.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, for Heaven's sake!" cries poor Headley, "this is really going too far. Gentlemen, the vestry is adjourned!"

"Best thing too! oughtn't never to have been called," says one and another.

And some one, as he went out, muttered something about "interloping strange doctors, colloquies with popish curates," which was answered by a—"Put 'mun in the quay pule," from Treluddra.

Tom stepped up to Treluddra instantly. "What were you so kind as to say, sir?"

Treluddra turned very pale. "I didn't say nought."

"Oh, but I assure you I heard; and I shall be most happy to jump into the quay pule this afternoon, if it will afford you the slightest amusement. Say the word, and I'll borrow a flute, and play you the Rogue's March all the while with my right hand, swimming with my left. Now, gentlemen, one word before we part!"

"Who be you?" cries some one.

"A man at least, and ought to have a fair hearing. Now, I ask you, what possible interest can I have in this matter? I knew when I began that I should give myself a frightful quantity of trouble, and get only what I have got."

"Why did you begin at all, then?"

"Because I was a very foolish, meddlesome ass,

who fancied that I ought to do my duty once in a way by my neighbours. Now, I have only to say, that if you will but forgive and forget, and let bygones be bygones, I promise you solemnly I'll never do my duty by you again as long as I live, nor interfere with the sacred privilege of every free-born Englishman, to do that which is right in the sight of his own eyes, and wrong too!"

"You'm making fun at us," said old Beer dubiously.

"Well, Mr. Beer, and isn't that better than quarrelling with you? Come along, we'll all go home and forget it, like good Christians. Perhaps the cholera won't come; and if it does, what's the odds so long as you're happy, eh?"

And to the intense astonishment both of the Lieutenant and Frank, Tom walked home with the malcontents, making himself so agreeable, that he was forgiven freely on the spot.

"What does the fellow mean? He's deserted us, sir, after bringing us here to make fools of us!"

Frank could give no answer; but Thurnall gave one himself that evening, both to Frank and the Lieutenant.

"The cholera will come; and these fellows are just mad; but I mustn't quarrel with them, mad or not."

"Why, then?"

"For the same reason that you must not. If we keep our influence, we may be able to do some good at the last, which means, in plain English, saving a

few human lives. As for you Lieutenant, you have behaved like a hero, and have been served as heroes generally are. What you must do is this. On the first hint of disease, pack up your traps and your good lady, and go and live in the watch-house across the river. As for the men's houses, I'll set them to rights in a day, if you'll get the commander of the district to allow you a little chloride of lime and whitewash."

And so the matter ended.

"You are a greater puzzle than ever to me, Thurnall," said Frank. "You are always pretending to care for nothing but your own interest, and yet here you have gone out of your way to incur odium, knowing, you say, that your cause was all but hopeless."

"Well, I do it because I like it. It's a sort of sporting with your true doctor. He blazes away at a disease where he sees one, as he would at a bear or a lion; the very sight of it excites his organ of destructiveness. Don't you understand me? You hate sin, you know. Well, I hate disease. Moral evil is your devil, and physical evil is mine. I hate it, little or big; I hate to see a fellow sick; I hate to see a child rickety and pale; I hate to see a speck of dirt in the street; I hate to see a woman's gown torn; I hate to see her stockings down at heel; I hate to see anything wasted, anything awry, anything going wrong; I hate to see water-power wasted, manure wasted, land wasted, muscle wasted, pluck wasted, brains wasted; I hate neglect, incapacity, idleness, ignorance, and all

the disease and misery which spring out of that. There's my devil; and I can't help it for the life of me, going right at his throat, wheresoever I meet him!"

Lastly, rather to clear his reputation than in the hope of doing good, Tom wrote up to London, and detailed the case to that much-calumniated body, the General Board of Health, informing them civilly, that the Nuisances Removal Act was simply waste paper; that he could not get it to bear at all on Aberalva; and that if he had done so, it would have been equally useless, for the simple reason that it constituted the offenders themselves judge and jury in their own case.

To which the Board returned for answer, that they were perfectly aware of the fact, and deeply deplored the same: but that as soon as cholera broke out in Aberalva, they should be most happy to send down an inspector.

To which Tom replied courteously, that he would not give them the trouble, being able, he trusted, to perform without assistance the not uncommon feat of shutting the stable-door after the horse was stolen.

And so was Aberalva left "a virgin city," undefiled by Government interference, to the blessings of that "local government," which signifies, in plain English, the leaving the few to destroy themselves and the many, by the unchecked exercise of the virtues of pride and ignorance, stupidity and stinginess.

But to Tom, in his sorest need, arose a new and

most unexpected coadjutor; and this was the way in which it came to pass.

For it befell in that pleasant summer time, "when small birds sing and shaughs are green," that Thurnall started, one bright Sunday eve, to see a sick child at an upland farm, some few miles from the town. And partly because he liked the walk, and partly because he could no other, having neither horse nor gig, he went on foot; and whistled as he went like any throstle-cock, along the pleasant vale, by flowery banks and ferny walls, by oak and ash and thorn, while Alva flashed and swirled, between green boughs below, clear coffee-brown from last night's rain. Some miles up the turnpike road he went, and then away to the right, through the ash-woods of Trebooze, up by the rill which drips from pool to pool over the ledges of grey slate, deep-bedded in dark sedge, and broad bright burdock leaves, and tall angelica, and ell-broad rings and tufts of king, and crown, and lady-fern, and all the semi-tropic luxuriance of the fat western soil, and steaming western woods; out into the boggy moor at the glen head, all fragrant with the gold-tipped gale, where the turf is enamelled with the hectic marsh violet, and the pink pimpernel, and the pale yellow leaf-stars of the butterwort, and the blue bells and green threads of the ivy-leaved campanula; out upon the steep smooth down above, and away over the broad cattle-pastures; and then to pause a moment, and look far and wide over land and sea.

It was a "day of God." The earth lay like one great emerald, ringed and roofed with sapphire; blue sea, blue mountain, blue sky overhead. There she lay, not sleeping, but basking in her quiet Sabbath joy, as though her two great sisters, of the sea and air, had washed her weary limbs with holy tears, and purged away the stains of last week's sin and toil, and cooled her hot worn forehead with their pure incense-breath, and folded her within their azure robes, and brooded over her with smiles of pitying love, till she smiled back in answer, and took heart and hope for next week's weary work.

Heart and hope for next week's work.—That was the sermon which it preached to Tom Thurnall, as he stood there alone, a stranger and a wanderer, like Ulysses of old; but, like him, self-helpful, cheerful, fate-defiant. In one respect indeed, he knew less than Ulysses, and was more of a heathen than he; for he knew not what Ulysses knew, that a heavenly guide was with him in his wanderings; still less what Ulysses knew not, that what he called the malicious sport of fortune was, in truth, the earnest education of a father; but who will blame him for getting strength and comfort from such merely natural founts, or say that the impulse came from below, and not from above, which made him say—

"Brave old world she is, after all, and right well made; and looks right well to-day, in her go-to-meeting clothes; and plenty of room and chance in her for a brave man to earn his bread, if he will but go right

on about his business, as the birds and the flowers do, instead of peaking and pining over what people think of him, like that miserable Briggs. Hark to that jolly old missel-thrush below! he's had his nest to build, and his supper to earn, and his young ones to feed, and all the crows and kites in the wood to drive away, the sturdy John Bull that he is; and yet he can find time to sing as merrily as an abbot, morning and evening, since he sang the new year in last January. And why should not I?"

Let him be a while; there are sounds of deeper meaning in the air, if his heart had ears to hear them; far off church-bells chiming to even-song; hymn-tunes floating up the glen from the little chapel in the vale. He may learn what they, too, mean some day. Honour to him, at least, that he has learnt what the missel-thrush below can tell him. If he accept cheerfully and manfully the things which he does see, he will be all the more able to enter hereafter into the deeper mystery of things unseen. The road toward true faith and reverence for God's kingdom of heaven does not lie through Manichæan contempt and slander of God's kingdom of earth.

So let him stride over the down, enjoying the mere fact of life, and health, and strength, and whistling shrilly to the bird below, who trumpets out a few grand ringing notes, and repeats them again and again, in saucy self-satisfaction; and then stops to listen for the answer to this challenge; and then rattles on again with a fresh passage, more saucily than ever, in

a tone which seems to ask,—"You could sing that, eh? but can you sing this, my fine fellow on the down above?" So he seems to Tom to say; and, tickled with the fancy, Tom laughs, and whistles, and laughs, and has just time to compose his features as he steps up to the farm-yard gate.

Let him be, I say again. He might have better Sunday thoughts; perhaps he will have some day. At least he is a man, and a brave one; and as the greater contains the less, surely before a man can be a good man, he must be a brave one first, much more a man at all. Cowards, old Odin held, inevitably went to the very bottom of Hela-pool, and by no possibility, unless of course they became brave at last, could rise out of that everlasting bog, but sank whining lower and lower, like mired cattle, to all eternity in the unfathomable peat-slime. And if the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Revelation, and the eighth verse, is to be taken as it stands, their doom has not altered since Odin's time, unless to become still worse.

Tom came up, over the home-close and through the barton-gate, through the farm-yard, and stopped at last at the porch. The front door was open, and the door beyond it; and ere he knocked, he stopped, looking in silence at a picture which held him spell-bound for a moment by its rich and yet quiet beauty.

Tom was no artist, and knew no more of painting, in spite of his old friendship with Claude, than was to be expected of a keen and observant naturalist who

had seen half the globe. Indeed, he had been in the habit of snubbing Claude's profession; and of arriving, on pre-Raphaelite grounds, at a by no means pre-Raphaelite conclusion. "A picture, you say, is worth nothing unless you copy Nature. But you can't copy her. She is ten times more gorgeous than any man can dare represent her. Ergo, every picture is a failure; and the nearest hedge-bush is worth all your galleries together"—a syllogism of sharp edge, which he would back up by Byron's—

> "I've seen much finer women, ripe and real,
> Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal."

But here was one of Nature's own pictures, drawn and coloured by more than mortal hand, and framed over and above, ready to his eye, by the square of the dark doorway, beyond which all was flooded with the full glory of the low north-western sun.

A dark oak-ribbed ceiling; walls of pale fawn-yellow; an open window, showing a corner of rich olive-stone wall, enamelled with golden lichens, orange and green combs of polypody, pink and grey tufts of pellitory, all glowing in the sunlight.

Above the window-sill rose a bush of maiden-blush roses; a tall spire of blue monkshood; and one head of scarlet lychnis, like a spark of fire; and behind all, the dark blue sea, which faded into the pale-blue sky.

At the window stood a sofa of old maroon leather, its dark hue throwing out in strong relief two figures who sat upon it. And when Tom had once looked at them, he looked at nothing else.

There sat the sick girl, her head nestling upon the shoulder of Grace Harvey; a tall, delicate thing of seventeen, with thin white cheeks, the hectic spot aflame on each, and long fair curls, which mingled lovingly with Grace's dark tresses, as they sat cheek against cheek, and hand in hand. Her eyes were closed; Tom thought at first that she was asleep: but there was a quiet smile about her pale lips; and every now and then her left hand left Grace's, to move toward a leaf full of strawberries which lay on Grace's lap; and Tom could see that she was listening intently to Grace, who told and told, in that sweet, measured voice of hers, her head erect, her face in the full blaze of sunshine, her great eyes looking out far away beyond the sea, beyond the sky, into some infinite which only she beheld.

Tom had approached unheard, across the farm-yard straw. He stood and looked his fill. The attitude of the two girls was so graceful, that he was loth to disturb it; and loth, too, to disturb a certain sunny calm which warmed at once and softened his stout heart.

He wished, too—he scarce knew why—to hear what Grace was saying; and as he listened, her voice was so distinct and delicate in its modulations, that every word came clearly to his ear.

It was the beautiful old legend of St. Dorothea:—

"So they did all sorts of dreadful things to her, and then led her away to die; and they stood laughing there. But after a little time there came a boy,

the prettiest boy that ever was seen on earth, and in his hand a basket full of fruits and flowers, more beautiful than tongue can tell. And he said, 'Dorothea sends you these, out of the heavenly garden which she told you of—will you believe her now?' And then, before they could reply, he vanished away. And Theophilus looked at the flowers, and tasted the fruit—and a new heart grew up within him; and he said, 'Dorothea's God shall be my God, and I will die for him like her.'

"So you see, darling, there are sweeter fruits than these, and gayer flowers, in the place to which you go; and all the lovely things in this world here will seem quite poor and worthless beside the glory of that better land which He will show you: and yet you will not care to look at them; for the sight of Him will be enough, and you will care to think of nothing else."

"And you are sure He will accept me, after all?" asked the sick girl, opening her eyes, and looking up at Grace. She saw Thurnall standing in the doorway, and gave a little scream.

Tom came forward, bowing. "I am very sorry to have disturbed you. I suspect Miss Harvey was giving you better medicine than I can give."

Now why did Tom say that, to whom the legend of St. Dorothea, and, indeed, that whole belief in a better land, was as a dream fit only for girls?

Not altogether because he must need say something civil. True, he felt, on the whole, about the future

state as Goethe did—"To the able man this world is not dumb: why should he ramble off into eternity? Such incomprehensible subjects lie too far off, and only disturb our thoughts, if made the subject of daily meditation." That there was a future state he had no doubt. Our having been born once, he used to say, is the strongest possible presumption in favour of our being born again; and probably, as nature always works upward and develops higher forms, in some higher state. Indeed, for aught he knew, the old ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs might be alive now, as lions—or as men. He himself, indeed, he had said, ere now, had been probably a pterodactyle of the Lias, neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring, but crocodile and bat in one, able alike to swim, or run, or fly, eat anything, and live in any element. Still it was no concern of his. He was here; and here was his business. He had not thought of this life before he came into it; and it would be time enough to think of the next life when he got into it. Besides, he had all a doctor's dislike of those terrors of the unseen world, with which some men are wont to oppress still more failing nature, and break the bruised reed. His business was to cure his patients' bodies; and if he could not do that, at least to see that life was not shortened in them by nervous depression and anxiety. Accustomed to see men of every character die under every possible circumstance, he had come to the conclusion that the "safety of a man's soul" could by no possibility be inferred from his death-bed temper.

The vast majority, good or bad, died in peace: why not let them die so? If nature kindly took off the edge of sorrow, by blunting the nervous system, what right had man to interfere with so merciful an arrangement? Every man, he held in his easy optimism, would go where he ought to go: and it could be no possible good to him—indeed, it might be a very bad thing for him, as in this life—to go where he ought not to go. So he used to argue, with three-fourths of mankind, mingling truth and falsehood: and would, on these grounds, have done his best to turn the dissenting preacher out of that house, had he found him in it. But to-day he was in a more lenient, perhaps in a more human, and therefore more spiritual mood. It was all very well for him, full of life, and power, and hope, to look on death in that cold, careless way; but for that poor young thing, cut off just as life opened from all that made life lovely—was not death for her a painful, ugly anomaly? Could she be blamed, if she shuddered at going forth into the unknown blank, she knew not whither? All very well for the old emperor of Rome, who had lived his life and done his work, to play with the dreary question—

> "Animula, vagula, blandula,
> Hospes comesque corporis,
> Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
> Rigidula, nudula, pallida?——"

But she, who had lived no life, and done no work —only had pined through weary years of hideous suffering; crippled and ulcerated with scrofula, now

dying of consumption: was it not a merciful dream, a beautiful dream, a just dream—so beautiful and just, that perhaps it might be true,—that in some fairer world, all this, and more, might be made up to her? If not, was it not a mistake and an injustice, that she should ever have come into the world at all? And was not Grace doing a rational as well as a loving work, in telling her, under whatsoever symbols, that such a home of rest and beauty awaited her? It was not the sort of place to which he expected, perhaps even wished, to go: but it fitted well enough with a young girl's hopes, a young girl's powers of enjoyment. Let it be; perhaps there was such a place,—why not?—fitted for St. Dorothea, and those cut off in youth like her; and other places fit for such as he. And he spoke more tenderly than usual (though he was never untender), as he said,—

"And you feel better to-day? I am sure you must, with such a kind friend, to tell you such sweet tales."

"I do not feel better, thank you. And why should I wish to do so? You all take too much trouble about me; why do you want to keep me here?"

"We are loth to lose you; and besides, while you can be kept here, it is a sign that you ought to be here."

"So Grace tells me. Yes, I will be patient, and wait till He has done His work. I am more patient now; am I not, Grace?" And she fondled Grace's hand, and looked up in her face.

"Yes," said Grace, who was standing near, with downcast face, trying to avoid Tom's eye. "Yes, you are very good; but you must not talk:" but the girl went on, with kindling eye,—

"Ah—I was very fretful at first, because I could not go to heaven at once: but Grace showed me how it was good to be here, as well as there, as long as He thought that I might be made perfect by sufferings. And since then, my pain has become quite pleasant to me, and I am ready to wait and bear—wait and bear."

"You must not talk,—see, you are beginning to cough," said Tom, who wished somehow to stop a form of thought which so utterly puzzled him. Not that he had not heard it before; commonplace enough indeed it is, thank God: but that day the words came home to him with spirit and power, all the more solemnly from their contrast with the scene around—without, all sunshine, joy, and glory: all which could tempt a human being to linger here: and within, that young girl longing to leave it all, and yet content to stay and suffer. What mysteries there were in the human spirit—mysteries to which that knowledge of mankind on which he prided himself gave him no key!

"What if I were laid on my back to-morrow for life, by a fall, a blow, as I have seen many a better man than me;—should I not wish to have one to talk to me, as she was talking to that child?" And for a moment a yearning after Grace came over him, as it

had done before, and swept from his mind the dark cloud of suspicion.

"Now I must talk with your mother," said he; "for you have better company than mine; and I hear her just coming in."

He settled little matters for his patient's comfort with the farmer's wife. When he returned to bid her good-bye Grace was gone.

"I hope I have not driven her away."

"Oh no; she had been here an hour, and she must go back now, to get her mother's supper."

"That is a good girl," said Tom, looking after her as she went down the field.

"She's an angel from heaven, sir. Not a three days go over without her walking up here all this way after her work, to comfort my poor maid—and all of us as well. It's like the dew of heaven upon us. Pity, sir, you didn't see her home."

"I should have liked it well enough; but folks might talk, if two young people were seen walking together Sunday evening."

"Oh, sir, they know her too well by now, for miles round: and you too, sir, I'll make bold to say."

"Well, at least I'll go after her."

So Tom went, and kept Grace in sight, till she had crossed the little moor, and disappeared in the wood below.

He had gone about a hundred yards into the wood, when he heard voices and laughter—then a loud shriek. He hurried forward. In another minute,

Grace rushed up to him, her eyes wide with terror and indignation.

"What is it?" cried he, trying to stop her: but, not seeming to see him, she dashed past him, and ran on. Another moment, and a man appeared in full pursuit.

It was Trebooze of Trebooze, an evil laugh upon his face.

Tom planted himself across the narrow path in an attitude which there was no mistaking.

Not a word passed between them. Silently and instinctively, like two fierce dogs, the two men flew upon each other; Tom full of righteous wrath, and Trebooze of half-drunken passion, turned to fury by the interruption.

He was a far taller and heavier man than Thurnall, and, as the bully of the neighbourhood, counted on an easy victory. But he was mistaken. After the first rush was over, he found it impossible to close with his foe, and saw in the doctor's face, now grown cool and business-like as usual, the wily smile of superior science and expected triumph.

"Brandy-and-water in the morning ought not to improve the wind," said Tom to himself, as his left hand countered provokingly, while his right rattled again and again upon Trebooze's watch-chain. "Justice will overtake you in the offending part, which I take to be the epigastric region."

In a few minutes more the scuffle ended shamefully enough for the sottish squireen.

Tom stood over him for a minute, as he sat grovelling and groaning among the long grass. "I may as well see that I have not killed him. No, he will do as well as ever—which is not saying much. . . . Now, sir! Go home quietly, and ask Mrs. Trebooze for a little rhubarb and salvolatile. I'll call up in the course of to-morrow to see how you are."

"I'll kill you, if I catch you!"

"As a man, I am open of course to be killed by any fair means; but as a doctor, I am still bound to see after my patient's health." And Tom bowed civilly, and walked back up the path to find Grace, after washing face and hands in the brook.

He found her up at Tolchard's farm, trembling and thankful.

"I cannot do less than see Miss Harvey safe home."

Grace hesitated.

"Mrs. Tolchard, I am sure, will walk with us; it would be safer, in case you felt faint again."

But Mrs. Tolchard would not come to save Grace's notions of propriety; so Tom passed Grace's arm through his own. She offered to withdraw it.

"No; you will require it. You do not know yet how much you have gone through. My fear is, that you will feel it all the more painfully when the excitement is past. I shall send you up a cordial; and you must promise me to take it. You owe me a little debt you know, to-day; you must pay it by taking my medicines."

Grace looked up at him sidelong; for there was a

playful tenderness in his voice which was new to her, and which thrilled her through and through.

"I will indeed, I promise you. But I am so much better now. Really, I can walk alone!" And she withdrew her arm from his, but not hastily.

After that they walked on awhile in silence. Grace kept her veil down, for her eyes were full of tears. She loved that man intensely, utterly. She did not seek to deny it to herself. God had given him to her, and hers he was. The very sea, the devourer whom she hated, who hungered to swallow up all young fair life, the very sea had yielded him up to her, alive from the dead. And yet that man, she knew, suspected her of a base and hateful crime. It was too dreadful! She could not exculpate herself, save by blank denial —and what would that avail? The large hot drops ran down her cheeks. She had need of all her strength to prevent sobbing.

She looked round. In the bright summer evening, all things were full of joy and love. The hedge-banks were gay as flower gardens; the swifts chased each other, screaming harsh delight; the ring-dove murmured in the wood beneath his world-old song, which she had taught the children a hundred times—

> "Curuckity coo, curuck coo;
> You love me, and I love you!"

The woods slept golden in the evening sunlight; and over head brooded, like one great smile of God, the everlasting blue.

"He will right me!" she said. "'Hold thee still

in the Lord, and abide patiently, and He will make thy righteousness clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noon-day!'" And after that thought she wept no more.

Was it as a reward for her faith that Tom began to talk to her? He had paced on by her side, serious, but not sad. True, he had suspected her; he suspected her still. But that scene with the dying child had been no sham. There, at least, there was nothing to suspect, nothing to sneer at. The calm purity, self-sacrifice, hope, which was contained in it, had softened his world-hardened spirit, and woke up in him feelings which were always pleasant, feelings which the sight of his father, or the writing to his father, could only awaken. Quaintly enough, the thought of Grace and of his father seemed intertwined, inextricable. If the old man had but such a nurse as she! And for a moment he felt a glow of tenderness toward her, because he thought she would be tender to his father. She had stolen his money, certainly; or if not, she knew where it was, and would not tell him. Well, what matter just then? He did not want the money at that minute. How much pleasanter and wiser to take things as they came, and enjoy himself while he could; and fancy that she was always what he had seen her that day. After all, it was much more pleasant to trust people than to suspect them: "Handsome is who handsome does! And besides, she did me the kindness of saving my life; so it would but be civil to talk to her a little."

He began to talk to her about the lovely scene around; and found, to his surprise, that she saw as much of it as he, and saw a great deal more in it than he. Her answers were short, modest, faltering; but each one of them suggestive; and Tom soon found that he had met with a mind which contained all the elements of poetry, and needed only education to develop them.

"What a blue stocking, pre-Raphaelite seventh-heavenarian she would have been, if she had had the misfortune to be born in that station of life!" But where a clever man is talking to a beautiful woman, talk he will, and must, for the mere sake of showing off, though she be but a village schoolmistress; and Tom soon found himself, with a secret sneer at his own vanity, displaying before her all the much finer things that he had seen in his travels; and as he talked, she answered, with quiet expressions of wonder, sympathy, regret at her own narrow sphere of experience, till, as if the truth was not enough, he found himself running to the very edge of exaggeration, and a little over it, in the enjoyment of calling out her passion for the marvellous, especially when called out in honour of himself.

And she, simple creature, drank it all in as sparkling wine, and only dreaded lest the stream should cease. Adventures with noble savages in palm-fringed coral-islands, with greedy robbers amid the fragrant hills of Greece, with fierce Indians beneath the snow-peaks of the Far West, with coward Mexicans among tunals

of cactus and agave, beneath the burning tropic sun—What a man he was! Where had he not been? and what had he not seen? And how he had been preserved—for her? And his image seemed to her utterly beautiful and glorious, clothed as it was in the beauty and glory of all that he had seen, and done, and suffered. Oh Love, Love, Love, the same in peasant and in peer! The more honour to you, then, old Love, to be the same thing in this world which is common to peasant and to peer. They say that you are blind; a dreamer, an exaggerator—a liar, in short. They know just nothing about you, then. You will not see people as they seem, and as they have become, no doubt: but why? because you see them as they ought to be, and are, in some deep way, eternally, in the sight of Him who conceived and created them.

At last she started, as if waking from a pleasant dream, and spoke, half to herself—

"Oh, how foolish of me—to be idling away this opportunity; the only one, perhaps, which I may have! Oh, Mr. Thurnall, tell me about this cholera!"

"What about it?"

"Everything. Ever since I heard of what you have been saying to the people, ever since Mr. Headley's sermon, it has been like fire in my ears!"

"I am truly glad to hear it. If all parsons had preached about it for the last fifteen years as Mr. Headley did last Sunday, if they had told people plainly that, if the cholera was God's judgment at all, it was His judgment of the sin of dirt, and that the

repentance which He required was to wash and be clean in literal earnest, the cholera would be impossible in England by now."

"Oh, Mr. Thurnall: but is it not God's doing? and can we stop His hand?"

"I know nothing about that, Miss Harvey. I only know that wheresoever cholera breaks out, it is some one's fault; and if deaths occur, some one ought to be tried for manslaughter—I had almost said murder, and transported for life."

"Some one? Who?"

"That will be settled in the next generation, when men have common sense enough to make laws for the preservation of their own lives, against the dirt, and covetousness, and idleness, of a set of human hogs."

Grace was silent for awhile.

"But can nothing be done to keep it off now? Must it come?"

"I believe it must. Still one may do enough to save many lives in the meanwhile."

"Enough to save many lives—lives?—immortal souls, too! Oh, what could I do?"

"A great deal, Miss Harvey," said Tom, across whom the recollection of Grace's influence flashed for the first time. What a help she might be to him!

And he talked on and on to her, and found that she entered into his plans with all her wild enthusiasm, but also with sound practical common sense; and Tom began to respect her intellect as well as her heart.

At last, however, she faltered—

"Oh, if I could but believe all this! Is it not fighting against God?"

"I do not know what sort of God yours is, Miss Harvey. I believe in some One who made all that!" and he pointed round him to the glorious woods and glorious sky; "I should have fancied from your speech to that poor girl, that you believed in Him also. You may, however, only believe in the same being in whom the Methodist parson believes, one who intends to hurl into endless agony every human being who has not had a chance of hearing the said preacher's nostrum for delivering men out of the hands of Him who made them!"

"What do you mean?" asked Grace, startled alike by Tom's words, and the intense scorn and bitterness of his tone.

"That matters little. What do you mean in turn? What did you mean by saying, that saving lives is saving immortal souls?"

"Oh, is it not giving them time to repent? What will become of them, if they are cut off in the midst of their sins?"

"If you had a son whom it was not convenient to you to keep at home, would his being a bad fellow—the greatest scoundrel on the earth—be a reason for your turning him into the streets to live by thieving, and end by going to the dogs for ever and a day?"

"No; but what do you mean?"

"That I do not think that God, when He sends a

human being out of this world, is more cruel than you or I would be. If we transport a man because he is too bad to be in England, and he shows any signs of mending, we give him a fresh chance in the colonies, and let him start again, to try if he cannot do better next time. And do you fancy that God, when He transports a man out of this world, never gives him a fresh chance in another—especially when nine out of ten poor rascals have never had a fair chance yet?"

Grace looked up in his face astonished.

"Oh, if I could but believe that! Oh! it would give me some gleam of hope for my two!—— But no—it's not in Scripture. Where the tree falls there it lies."

"And as the fool dies, so dies the wise man; and there is one account to the righteous and to the wicked. And a man has no pre-eminence over a beast, for both turn alike to dust; and Solomon does not know, he says, or any one else, anything about the whole matter, or even whether there be any life after death at all; and so, he says, the only wise thing is to leave such deep questions alone, for Him who made us to settle in His own way, and just to fear God and keep His commandments, and do the work which lies nearest us with all our might."

Grace was silent.

"You are surprised to hear me quote Scripture, and well you may be: but that same book of Ecclesiastes is a very old favourite with me; for I am no

Christian, but a worlding, if ever there was one. But it does puzzle me why you, who are a Christian, should talk one half-hour as you have been talking to that poor girl, and the next go for information about the next life to poor old disappointed, broken-hearted Solomon, with his three hundred and odd idolatrous wives, who confesses fairly that this life is a failure, and that he does not know whether there is any next life at all."

Whether Tom was altogether right or not, is not the question here; the novelist's business is to represent the real thoughts of mankind, when they are not absolutely unfit to be told; and certainly Tom spoke the doubts of thousands when he spoke his own.

Grace was silent still.

"Well," he said, "beyond that I can't go, being no theologian. But when a preacher tells people in one breath of a God who so loves men that He gave His own Son to save them, and in the next, that the same God so hates men that He will cast nine-tenths of them into hopeless torture for ever,—(and if that is not hating, I don't know what is),—unless he, the preacher, gets a chance of talking to them for a few minutes—Why, I should like, Miss Harvey, to put that gentleman upon a real fire for ten minutes, instead of his comfortable Sunday's dinner, which stands ready frying for him, and which he was going home to eat, as jolly as if all the world was not going to destruction; and there let him feel what fire was like, and reconsider his statements."

Grace looked up at him no more; but walked on in silence, pondering many things.

"Howsoever that may be, sir, tell me what to do in this cholera, and I will do it, if I kill myself with work or infection!"

"You shan't do that. We cannot spare you from Aberalva, Grace," said Tom; "you must save a few more poor creatures ere you die, out of the hands of that Good Being who made little children, and love, and happiness, and the flowers, and the sunshine, and the fruitful earth; and who, you say, redeemed them all again, when they were lost, by an act of love which passes all human dreams."

"Do not talk so!" cried Grace. "It frightens me; it puzzles me, and makes me miserable. Oh, if you would but become a Christian!"

"And listen to the Gospel?"

"Yes—oh yes!"

"A gospel means good news, I thought. When you have any to tell me, I will listen. Meanwhile, the news that three out of four of those poor fellows down town are going to a certain place, seems to me such terribly bad news, that I can't help fancying that it is not the Gospel at all; and so get on the best way I can, listening to the good news about God which this grand old world, and my microscope, and my books, tell me. No, Grace, I have more good news than that, and I'll confess it to you."

He paused, and his voice softened.

"Say what the preacher may, He must be a good

God who makes such creatures as you, and sends them into the world to comfort poor wretches. Follow your own sweet heart, Grace, and torment yourself no more with these dark dreams!"

"My heart?" cried she, looking down; "it is deceitful and desperately wicked."

"I wish mine were too, then," said Tom: "but it cannot be, as long as it is so unlike yours. Now stop, Grace, I want to speak to you."

There was a gate in front of them, leading into the road.

As they came to it, Tom lingered with his hand upon the top bar, that Grace might stop. She did stop, half-frightened. Why did he call her Grace?

"I wish to speak to you on one matter, on which I believe I ought to have spoken long ago."

She looked up at him, surprise in her large eyes: and turned pale as he went on.

"I ought long ago to have begged your pardon for something rude which I said to you at your own door. This day has made me quite ashamed of——"

But she interrupted him, quite wildly, gasping for breath.

"The belt? The belt? Oh, my God! my God! Have you heard anything more?—anything more?"

"Not a word; but——"

To his astonishment, she heaved a deep sigh, as if relieved from a sudden fear. His face clouded, and his eyebrows rose. Was she guilty, then, after all?"

With the quick eyes of love, she saw the change; and broke out passionately,—

"Yes; suspect me! suspect me, if you will! only give me time! Send me to prison, innocent as I am —innocent as that child there above—would God I were dying like her!—Only give me time! O misery! I had hoped you had forgotten—that it was lost in the sea—that—what am I saying?—Only give me time!"—and she dropped on her knees before him, wringing her hands.

"Miss Harvey! This is not worthy of you. If you be innocent, as I don't doubt, what more do you need—or I?"

He took her hands, and lifted her up: but she still kept looking down, round, upwards, like a hunted deer, and pleading in words which seemed sobbed out—as by some poor soul on the rack—between choking spasms of agony.

"Oh, I don't know,—God help me! O Lord, help me! I will try and find it—I know I shall find it! only have patience; have patience with me a little, and I know I shall bring it you; and then—and then you will forgive?—forgive?"

And she laid her hands upon his arms, and looked up in his face with a piteous smile of entreaty.

She had never looked so beautiful as at that moment. The devil saw it; and entered into the heart of Thomas Thurnall. He caught her in his arms, kissed away her tears, stopped her mouth with kisses. "Yes! I'll wait—wait for ever, if you

will! I'll lose another belt, for such another look as that!"

She was bewildered for a moment, poor fond wretch, at finding herself where she would gladly have stayed for ever: but quickly she recovered her reason,

"Let me go!" she cried, struggling. "This is not right! Let me go, sir!" and she tried to cover her burning cheeks with her hands.

"I will not, Grace! I love you! I love you, I tell you!"

"You do not, sir!" and she struggled still more fiercely. "Do not deceive yourself! Me you cannot deceive! Let me go, I say! You could not demean yourself to love a poor girl like me!"

Utterly losing his head, Tom ran on with passionate words.

"No, sir! you know that I am not fit to be your wife: and do you fancy that I——"

Maddened now, Tom went on, ere he was aware, from a foolish deed to a base speech.

"I know nothing, but that I shall keep you in pawn for my belt. Till that is at least restored, you are in my power, Grace! Remember that!"

She thrust him away with so sudden and desperate a spasm, that he was forced to let her go. She stood gazing at him, a trembling deer no longer, but rather a lioness at bay, her face flashing beautiful indignation.

"In your power! Yes, sir! My character, my

life, for aught I know: but not my soul. Send me to Bodmin Gaol if you will; but offer no more insults to a modest maiden! Oh!"—and her expression changed to one of lofty sorrow and pity;—"Oh! to find all men alike at heart? After having fancied you—fancied you" (what she had fancied him her woman's modesty dare not repeat)—"to find you even such another as Mr. Trebooze!"

Tom was checked. As for mere indignation, in such cases, he had seen enough of that to trust it no more than "ice that is one night old:" but pity for him was a weapon of defence to which he was unaccustomed. And there was no contempt in her pity; and no affectation either. Her voice was solemn, but tender, gently upbraiding, like her countenance. Never had he felt Grace's mysterious attraction so strong upon him; and for the first and last time, perhaps, for many a year, he answered with downcast eyes of shame.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Harvey. I have been rude—mad. If you will look in your glass when you go home, and have a woman's heart in you, you may at least see an excuse for me: but like Mr. Trebooze I am not. Forgive and forget, and let us walk home rationally." And he offered to take her hand.

"No: not now! Not till I can trust you, sir!" said she. The words were lofty enough: but there was a profound melancholy in their tone which humbled Tom still more. Was it possible—she seemed to have hinted it—that she had thought him

a very grand personage till now, and that he had disgraced himself in her eyes?

If a man had suspected Tom of such a feeling, I fear he would have cared little, save how to restore the balance by making a fool of the man who fancied him a fool: but no male self-sufficiency or pride is proof against the contempt of woman; and Tom slunk along by the schoolmistress's side, as if he had been one of her naughtiest school-children. He tried, of course, to brazen it out to his own conscience. He had done no harm, after all; indeed, never seriously meant any. She was making a ridiculous fuss about nothing. It was all part and parcel of her methodistical cant. He dared say that she was not as prudish with the methodist parson. And at that base thought he paused; for a flush of rage, and a strong desire on such hypothesis to slay the said methodist parson, or any one else who dared even to look sweet on Grace, showed him plainly enough what he had long been afraid of, that he was really in love with her; and that, as he put it, if she did not make a fool of herself about him, he was but too likely to end in making a fool of himself about her. However, he must speak, to support his own character as a man of the world; —it would never do to knock under to a country girl in this way;—she might go and boast of it all over the town;—beside, foiled or not, he would not give in without trying her mettle somewhat further.

"Miss Harvey, will you forgive me?"

"I have forgiven you."

"Will you forget?"

"If I can!" she said, with a marked expression, which signified (though, of course, she did not mean Tom to understand it), "some of what is past is too precious, and some too painful, to forget."

"I do not ask you to forget all which has passed!"

"I am afraid that there is nothing which would be any credit to you, sir, to have remembered."

"Credit or none," said Tom, unabashed, "do not forget one word that I said."

She looked hastily and sidelong round,—"That I am in your power?"

"No! curse it! I wish I had bitten out my tongue before I had said that. No! that I am in your power, Miss Harvey."

"Sir! I never heard you say that; and if you had, the sooner anything so untrue is forgotten the better."

"I said that I loved you, Grace; and if that does not mean that——"

"Sir! Mr. Thurnall! I cannot, I will not hear! You only insult me, sir, by speaking thus, when you know that—that you consider me—a thief!" and the poor girl burst into tears again.

"I do not! I do not;" cried Tom, growing really earnest at the sight of her sorrow. "Did I not begin this unhappy talk by begging your pardon for ever having let such a thought cross my mind?"

"But you do! you do! you told me as much at my own door; and I have seen it ever since, till I have almost gone mad under it!"

"I will swear to you by all that is sacred that I do not! Oh, Grace, the first moment I saw you my heart told me that it was impossible; and now, this afternoon, as I listened to you with that sick girl, I felt a wretch for ever having——Grace, I tell you, you made me feel, for the moment, a better man than I ever felt in my life before. A poor return I have made for that, truly!"

Grace looked up in his face gasping.

"Oh, say that! say that again. Oh, good Lord, merciful Lord, at last! Oh, if you knew what it was to have even one weight lifted off, among all my heavy burdens, and that weight the hardest to bear. God forgive me that it should have been so! Oh, I can breathe freely now again, that I know I am not suspected by you."

"By you?" Tom could not but see what, after all, no human being can conceal, that Grace cared for him. And the devil came and tempted him once more: but this time it was in vain. Tom's better angel had returned; Grace's tender guilelessness, which would with too many men only have marked her out as the easier prey, was to him as a sacred shield before her innocence. So noble, so enthusiastic, so pure! He could not play the villain with that woman.

But there was plainly a mystery. What were the burdens, heavier even than unjust suspicion, of which she had spoken? There was no harm in asking.

"But, Grace—Miss Harvey—You will not be angry

with me if I ask?—Why speak so often, as if finding this money depended on you alone? You wish me to recover it, I know; and if you can counsel me, why not do so? Why not tell me whom you suspect?"

Her old wild terror returned in an instant. She stopped short—

"Suspect? I suspect? Oh, I have suspected too many already! Suspected till I began to hate my fellow-creatures—hate life itself, when I fancied that I saw 'thief' written on every forehead. Oh, do not ask me to suspect any more!"

Tom was silent.

"Oh," she cried, after a moment's pause. "Oh, that we were back in those old times I have read of, when they used to put people to the torture to make them confess!"

"Why, in Heaven's name?"

"Because then I should have been tortured, and have confessed it, true or false, in the agony, and have been hanged. They used to hang them then, and put them out of their misery; and I should have been put out of mine, and no one have been blamed but me for ever more."

"You forget," said Tom, lost in wonder, "that then I should have blamed you, as well as every one else."

"True; yes, it was a foolish faithless word. I did not take it, and it would have been no good to my soul to say I did. Lies cannot prosper, cannot prosper, Mr. Thurnall!" and she stopped short again.

"What, my dear Grace?" said he, kindly enough; for he began to fear that she was losing her wits.

"I saved your life:"

"You did, Grace."

"Then, I never thought to ask for payment; but, oh, I must now. Will you promise me one thing in return?"

"What you will, as I am a man and a gentleman; I can trust you to ask nothing which is not worthy of you."

Tom spoke truth. He felt,—perhaps love made him feel it all the more easily,—that whatever was behind, he was safe in that woman's hands.

"Then promise me that you will wait one month, only one month: ask no questions; mention nothing to any living soul. And if, before that time, I do not bring you that belt back, send me to Bodmin Gaol, and let me bear my punishment."

"I promise," said Tom. And the two walked on again in silence, till they neared the head of the village.

Then Grace went forward, like Nausicaa when she left Ulysses, lest the townsfolk should talk; and Tom sat down upon a bank and watched her figure vanishing in the dusk.

Much he puzzled, hunting up and down in his cunning head for an explanation of the mystery. At last he found one which seemed to fit the facts so well, that he rose with a whistle of satisfaction, and walked homewards.

Evidently, her mother had stolen the belt; and

Grace was, if not a repentant accomplice—for that he could not believe,—at least aware of the fact.

"Well, it is a hard knot for her to untie, poor child; and on the strength of having saved my life, she shall untie it her own way. I can wait. I hope the money won't be spent meanwhile, though, and the empty leather returned to me when wanted no longer. However, that's done already, if done at all. I was a fool for not acting at once;—a double fool for suspecting her! Ass that I was, to take up with a false scent, and throw myself off the true one! My everlasting unbelief in people has punished itself this time. I might have got a search-warrant three months ago, and had that old witch safe in the bilboes. But no—I might not have found it, after all, and there would have been only an esclandre; and if I know that girl's heart, she would have been ten times more miserable for her mother than for herself, so it's as well as it is. Besides, it's really good fun to watch how such a pretty plot will work itself out;—as good as a pack of harriers with a cold scent and a squatted hare. So, live and let live. Only, Thomas Thurnall, if you go for to come for to go for to make such an abominable ass of yourself with that young lady any more, like a miserable school-boy, you will be pleased to make tracks, and vanish out of these parts for ever. For my purse can't afford to have you marrying a schoolmistress in your impoverished old age; and my character, which also is my purse, can't afford worse."

One word of Grace's had fixed itself in Tom's memory. What did she mean by "her two?"

He contrived to ask Willis that very evening.

"Oh, don't you know, sir? She had a young brother drowned, a long while ago, when she was sixteen or so. He went out fishing on the Sabbath, with another like him, and both were swamped. Wild young lads, both, as lads will be. But she, sweet maid, took it so to heart, that she never held up her head since; nor will, I think, at times, to her dying day."

"Humph! Was she fond of the other lad, then?"

"Sir," said Willis, "I don't think it's fair like,—not decent, if you'll excuse an old sailor,—to talk about young maids' affairs, that they wouldn't talk of themselves, perhaps not even to themselves. So I never asked any questions myself."

"And think it rude in me to ask any. Well, I believe you're right, good old gentleman that you are. What a nobleman you'd have made, if you had had the luck to have been born in that station of life!"

"I have found too much trouble, in doing my duty in my humble place, to wish to be in any higher one."

"So!" thought Tom to himself, "a girl's fancy: but it explains so much in the character, especially when the temperament is melancholic. However, to quote Solomon once more, 'A live dog is better than a dead lion;' and I have not much to fear from a rival who has been washed out of this world ten years since.

Heyday! Rival! quotha? Tom Thurnall, you are going to make a fool of yourself. You must go, sir! I warn you; you must flee, till you have recovered your senses."

There appeared next morning in Tom's shop a new phenomenon. A smart youth, dressed in what he considered to be the newest London fashion; but which was really that translation of last year's fashion which happened to be current in the windows of the Bodmin tailors. Tom knew him by sight and name, —one Mr. Creed, a squireen like Trebooze, and an especial friend of Trebooze's, under whose tutelage he had learned to smoke cavendish assiduously from the age of fifteen, thereby improving neither his stature, nor his digestion, his nerves, nor the intelligence of his countenance.

He entered with a lofty air, and paused awhile as he spoke.

"Is it possible," said Tom to himself, "that Trebooze has sent me a challenge? It would be too good fun. I'll wait and see." So he went on rolling pills.

"I say, sir," quoth the youth, who had determined, as an owner of land, to treat the doctor duly *de haut en bas*, and had a vague notion that a liberal use of the word "sir" would both help thereto, and be consonant with professional style of duel diplomacy, whereof he had read in novels.

Tom turned slowly, and then took a long look at him over the counter through halfshut eye-lids, with

chin upraised, as if he had been suddenly afflicted with short sight; and worked on meanwhile steadily at his pills.

"That is, I wish—to speak to you, sir—ahem——!" went on Mr. Creed; being gradually but surely discomfited by Tom's steady gaze.

"Don't trouble yourself, sir: I see your case in your face. A slight nervous affection—will pass as the digestion improves. I will make you up a set of pills for the night; but I should advise a little ammonia and valerian at once. May I mix it?"

"Sir! you mistake me, sir!"

"Not in the least; you have brought me a challenge from Mr. Trebooze."

"I have, sir!" said the youth with a grand air, at once relieved by having the awful words said for him, and exalted by the dignity of his first, and perhaps last, employment in that line.

"Well, sir," said Tom deliberately, "Mr. Trebooze does me a kindness for which I cannot sufficiently thank him, and you also, as his second. It is full six months since I fought, and I was getting hardly to know myself again."

"You will have to fight now, sir!" said the youth, trying to brazen off by his discourtesy increasing suspicion that he had "caught a Tartar."

"Of course, of course. And of course, too, I fight you afterwards."

"I—I, sir? I am Mr. Trebooze's friend, his second, sir. You do not seem to understand, sir!"

"Pardon me, young gentleman," said Tom, in a very quiet, determined voice; "it is I who have a right to tell you that you do not understand in such matters as these. I had fought my man, and more than one of them, while you were eating blackberries in a short jacket."

"What do you mean, sir?" quoth the youth in fury; and began swearing a little.

"Simple fact. Are you not about twenty-three years old?"

"What is that to you, sir?"

"No business of mine, of course. You may be growing into your second childhood for aught I care: but if, as I guess, you are about twenty-three, I, as I know, am thirty-six: then I fought my first duel when you were five years old, and my tenth, I should say, when you were fifteen; at which time, I suppose, you were not ashamed either of the jacket or the blackberries."

"You will find me a man now, sir, at all events," said Creed, justly wroth at what was, after all, a sophism; for if a man is not a man at twenty, he never will be one.

"*Tant mieux.* You know, I suppose, that as the challenged, I have the choice of weapons?"

"Of course, sir," said Creed, in an off-hand generous tone, because he did not very clearly know.

"Then, sir, I always fight across a handkerchief. You will tell Mr. Trebooze so; he is, I really believe, a brave man, and will accept the terms. You will

tell yourself the same, whether you be a brave man or not."

The youth lost the last words in those which went before them. He was no coward: would have stood up to be shot at, at fifteen paces, like any one else; but the deliberate butchery of fighting across a handkerchief——

"Do I understand you, sir?"

"That depends on whether you are clever enough, or not, to comprehend your native tongue. Across a handkerchief, I say, do you hear that?" And Tom rolled on at his pills.

"I do."

"And when I have fought him, I fight you!" And the pills rolled steadily at the same pace.

"But—sir?—Why—sir?"

"Because," said Tom, looking him full in the face, "because you, calling yourself a gentleman, and being, more shame for you, one by birth, dare to come here, for a foolish vulgar superstition called honour, to ask me, a quiet medical man, to go and be shot at by a man whom you know to be a drunken, profligate, blackguard: simply because, as you know as well as I, I interfered to prevent his insulting a poor helpless girl: and in so doing, was forced to give him what you, if you are (as I believe) a gentleman, would have given him also, in my place."

"I don't understand you, sir!" said the lad, blushing all the while, as one honestly conscience-stricken; for Tom had spoken the exact truth, and he knew it.

"Don't lie, sir, and tell me that you don't understand; you understand every word which I have spoken, and you know that it is true."

"Lie?"

"Yes, lie. Look you, sir; I have no wish to fight——"

"You will fight, though, whether you wish it or not," said the youth with a hysterical laugh, meant to be defiant.

"But—I can snuff a candle; I can split a bullet on a penknife at fifteen paces."

"Do you mean to frighten us by boasting? We shall see what you can do when you come on the ground."

"Across a handkerchief: but on no other condition; and, unless you will accept that condition, I will assuredly, the next time I see you, be we where we may, treat you as I treated your friend Mr Trebooze.——I'll do it now! Get out of my shop, sir! What do you want here, interfering with my honest business?"

And, to the astonishment of Mr. Trebooze's second, Tom vaulted clean over the counter, and rushed at him open-mouthed.

Sacred be the honour of the gallant West country: but, "both being friends," as Aristotle has it, "it is a sacred duty to speak the truth." Mr. Creed vanished through the open door.

"I rid myself of the fellow jollily," said Tom to Frank that day, after telling him the whole story.

"And no credit to me. I saw from the minute he came in there was no fight in him."

"But suppose he had accepted—or suppose Trebooze accepts still?"

"There was my game—to frighten him. He'll take care Trebooze shan't fight, for he knows that he must fight next. He'll go home and patch the matter up, trust him. Meanwhile, the oaf had not even *savoir faire* enough to ask for my second. Lucky for me; for I don't know where to have found one, save the lieutenant; and though he would have gone out safe enough, it would have been a bore for the good old fellow."

"And," said Frank, utterly taken aback by Tom's business-like levity, "you would actually have stood to shoot, and be shot at, across a handkerchief?"

Tom stuck out his great chin, and looked at him with one of his quaint sidelong moues.

"You are my very good friend, sir: but not my father-confessor."

"I know that: but really—as a mere question of human curiosity——"

"Oh, if you ask me on the human ground, and not on the sacerdotal, I'll tell you. I've tried it twice, and I should be sorry to try it again; though it's a very easy dodge. Keep your right elbow up—up to your ear—and the moment you hear the word, fire. A high elbow and a cool heart—that's all; and that wins."

"Wins? Good heavens? As you are here alive you must have killed your man?"

"No. I only shot my men each through the body; and each of them deserved it: but it is an ugly chance; I should have been sorry to try it on that yokel. The boy may make a man yet. And what's more," said Tom, bursting into a great laugh, "he will make a man, and go down to his fathers in peace, *quant à moi;* and so will that wretched Trebooze. For I'll bet you my head to a China orange, I hear no more of this matter; and don't even lose Trebooze's custom."

"Upon my word, I envy your sanguine temperament!"

"Mr. Headley, I shall quietly make my call at Trebooze to-morrow, as if nothing had happened. What will you bet me that I am not received as usual?"

"I never bet," said Frank.

"Then you do well. It is a foolish and a dirty trick; playing with edge tools, and cutting one's own fingers. Nevertheless, I speak truth, as you will see."

"You are a most extraordinary man. All this is so contrary to your usual caution."

"When you are driven against the ropes, 'hit out' is the old rule of Fistiana and common sense. It is an extreme bore: all the more reason for showing such an ugly front, as to give people no chance of its happening again. Nothing so dangerous as half-measures, Headley. 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,' your creed says. Mine only translates it into practice."

"I have no liking for half-measures myself."

"Did you ever," said Tom, "hear the story of the two Sandhurst broomsquires?"

"Broomsquires?"

"So we call, in Berkshire, squatters on the moor who live by tying heath into brooms. Two of them met in Reading market once, and fell out:—

"'How ever do you manage to sell your brooms for three halfpence? I steals the heth, and I steals the binds, and I steals the handles: and yet I can't afoord to sell 'em under twopence.'

"'Ah, but you see,' says the other, 'I steals mine ready made.'

"Moral—If you're going to do a thing, do it outright."

That very evening, Tom came in again."

"Well; I've been to Trebooze."

"And fared, how?"

"Just as I warned you. Inquired into his symptoms; prescribed for his digestion—if he goes on as he is doing, he will soon have none left to prescribe for; and, finally, plastered, with a sublime generosity, the nose which my own knuckles had contused."

"Impossible! you are the most miraculously impudent of men!"

"Pish! simple common sense. I knew that Mrs. Trebooze would suspect that the world had heard of his mishap, and took care to let her know that I knew, by coming up to inquire for him."

"*Cui bono?*"

"Power. To have them, or any one, a little more

in my power. Next, I knew that he dared not fly out at me, for fear I should tell Mrs. Trebooze what he had been after—you see? Ah, it was delicious to have the great oaf sitting sulking under my fingers, longing to knock my head off, and I plastering away, with words of deepest astonishment and condolence. I verily believe that, before we parted, I had persuaded him that his black eye proceeded entirely from his having run up against a tree in the dark."

"Well," said Frank, half sadly, though enjoying the joke in spite of himself, "I cannot help thinking it would have been a fit moment for giving the poor wretch a more solemn lesson."

"My dear sir,—a good licking—and he had one, and something over—is the best lesson for that manner of biped. That's the way to school him: but as we are on lessons, I'll give you a hint."

"Go on, model of self-sufficiency!" said Frank.

"Scoff at me if you will, I am proof. But hearken —you mustn't turn out that schoolmistress. She's an angel, and I know it; and if I say so of any human being, you may be sure I have pretty good reasons."

"I am beginning to be of your mind myself," said Frank.

END OF VOL. I.

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